

4-5-2010

A Philosophical Inquiry on the Valuation and Selection of Musical Materials for Culturally Diverse Learners in Global Environments

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A Philosophical Inquiry on the Valuation and Selection of Musical Materials for
Culturally Diverse Learners in Global Environments

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Date of Approval:
April 5th, 2010

Keywords: postmodernism, multiculturalism, value, diversity, education, Western,
aesthetic, quality, inclusion

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For Jenny, Drew, Aden, and Anna.

For Victor and his beautiful new baby that will be here soon.

For Carolyn and her beautiful new baby that is already here.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

Ecclesiastes 12:12

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ABSTRACT

The selection of musical materials for use in the classroom is problematic. Since music educators have limited time with students, the inclusion of musical materials necessitates the perceived exclusion of other musical materials. This perception is due in part to the increasing diversity of students represented in the classroom, the cultural labeling of musical materials, the influence of multiculturalism on music education, and the influence of the Western aesthetic in music education. Since diverse groups can and do propose socially perceived valuations of these materials as critical for the inclusion of specific musical materials for use in the classroom, this inquiry examines some of the problems associated with the perceived valuations of musical materials for students. As multiple musical materials are used toward similar educational outcomes, or a single musical material is used toward diverse educational outcomes, the value of musical materials is determined by their perceived function for the individual, the group, and the universal human. These valuations are connected to ideologies that sometimes conflict with one another. Numerous solutions to these conflicts in diverse student populations are not perfect, but necessary. Considerations of similar characteristics of perceived musical quality within and across cultures provide an approach to one possible solution. Music educators should be better equipped to make appropriate decisions as they choose musical materials for use in the classroom when consideration is given to the diverse

perceptions of these materials around the world and the historical and socio-political frameworks that describe what music education should be.

Chapter 1

Introduction

A variety of philosophical frameworks is available for the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom. Depending on the diversity of educational goals of communities, schools, and teachers, musical materials are selected for use according to how well these materials are perceived to be situated within these goals. Over the last few decades, the nature of these musical goals has become more and more diverse as the needs and desires of students expand (Jorgensen, 2003). As music educators strive appropriately to adapt, past assumptions about music education are revisited, revised, rejected, and even resurrected as new assumptions are woven into the existing philosophical fabric. But music educators “disagree about their objectives” for the diverse populations they serve (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 3). Thus, music education, like other disciplines, seeks to reconsider past assumptions as it moves toward cultural rather than universal (or modern, or Western) perceptions.

Further complicating the issue of what to do within music education is the stability of music programs. As music programs are marginalized in public school curriculums across the country, it becomes essential for music educators to advocate music education to their schools and communities. Bennett Reimer, a leading advocate and philosopher of music education states, “because of our limited vision of what proper music education consists of we have become progressively more irrelevant . . . ” (2007, p. 3). The issue of relevance has led some music educators to challenge current practices in music education. For many, defending the need for their programs has become essential

for survival, even to the point of questioning and rethinking traditional practices in music education that are perceived to no longer serve the needs of students, or the needs of too few students (see Williams, 2007).

The overwhelming presence of music in diverse cultures suggests that humans place high value on musical experiences. The question that remains is related to the nature of these values. According to Gardiner (2003), music has the ability to direct us toward appreciating these values, which include “the need to make sense of the world, creational activity, and assessment of beauty” (p. 1). However, these potential benefits of music are dependent on how we choose to interact with music, and for what purposes.

In order to advocate for music education, it becomes necessary, then, to find firm footing in order to answer the fundamental question of what music is *for* (Sloboda, 2001). Reimer (2005) argues that “music must be conceived . . . as a basic subject with its unique characteristics of ways to know and ways to be intelligent, that music be offered to all children if they are not to be deprived of its values” (p. 5). It is these unique characteristics that will need to find broad acceptance between music educators, students, administrators, communities, and the diverse cultures they represent if music education is to thrive in contemporary society. The philosophical bases for the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom are fundamentally reflective of how educators are measuring the value of music and music education.

Brief History

In the 19th century, the moral development of the individual took precedence. Popular music, folk music, and artistic music of the time were not readily applied in music education. Instead, songs promoting nationalism and devotion were considered to

be important. After studying the teachings of Swiss teacher Johann Pestalozzi, Lowell Mason incorporated rote singing and teaching musical materials sequentially. In addition, Mason successfully commercialized his own musical materials for music educators, creating both supply and demand for musical materials (Mark & Gary, 1999).

In the secondary schools, the vocal music curriculum focused on music composed primarily by Western composers, and incorporated texts such as the *High School Choralist* (1866) and *The Choralist's Companion* (1872). Around the turn of the century, interest in music appreciation for classical music was encouraged by facilitating the opportunity for high school students to attend classical concerts. The educational value of these concerts for these students was considered as a kind of training for listeners. School orchestras did not begin to appear substantially in the United States until the turn of the century. The popularity of touring bands and orchestras after the civil war eventually led to the extracurricular high school orchestra. Elementary orchestras soon followed (Mark & Gary, 1999).

The subject of musical materials did not become a significantly debated topic in music education until the Yale Seminar on Music Education at Yale University in 1963, where the primary issues of importance were musical materials and music performance. The meeting spurred the Julliard Repertory Project; a project devoted to developing “a large body of authentic and meaningful music to augment and enrich the repertory available to music teachers in the early grades” (Mark & Gary, 1999, p. 345). What emerged was a list of over 400 compositions from the traditional cannon of Western classical music, as well as some folk music. However, it was not embraced by music educators. Not all educators were in agreement about what music education should

become. This became more apparent during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, when rapid changes in American society left education in general scrambling to keep up (Mark & Gary, 1999).

In 1958, the National Society for the Study of Education published the *Basic Concepts in Music Education*, a collection of essays that attempted to lay the groundwork for a philosophy of music education. Several influential writers supported the idea that teaching music for its own value would be critical for student enrichment, and the concept of aesthetic education was born as a tool for advocacy. Along with aesthetic education, the idea of conceptual learning developed, and a wide range of methods for teaching music emerged, including the methods of Dalcroze, Orff, Suzuki, and Kodály. It is during this time that many new musical materials were also legitimized as a part of the curriculum, including jazz and popular music. Their legitimacy was supported by the Tanglewood Symposium, in which participants agreed that the development of a musical hierarchy was impossible as well as inappropriate in that the concept of musical hierarchy promoted class barriers. This further opened the door for all types of music to be incorporated into the curriculum, including rock, electronic, and world musics (Mark & Gary, 1999).

The selection of musical materials for the classroom has been a source of contention for music educators, especially over the past 50 years. The Yale seminar of 1963 addressed some of the problems with the music materials being utilized in the American classroom, at the time considered to be of “appaling quality,” “constricted in scope,” “corrupted by arrangements,” appealing “to the lowest common denominator,” and “chosen . . . for its capacity to offend the smallest possible number” (Mark & Gary,

1999, pp. 11–12). These contentions are still alive for some. Glidden (2009) states:

I am sorry to report that from my observation, we have *lost ground* since the Yale Seminar of 1963, the report of which intrigued me to the point of passion about the prospect of teaching the literature of music in schools on a par with teaching the literature of the language.

This statement reflects a general dissatisfaction with the selection of musical materials over time, generally shared by all concerned, although offering different reasons for championing diverse materials.

Music education in the United States today reflects a complex and diverse mixture of traditions, cultures, and commercial consumerism (Mark & Gary, 1999). From its inclusion in 19th century public school classrooms utilizing materials as tools for the moral development of the student, American music education has been transformed toward a representation of the desires of the global community, including everything from gospel choirs and marching bands to music technology and world music courses. However, this transformation has not made a clean break from past traditions and cultures in order to replace them with newer and seemingly more relevant ideas. Christopher Small argued that the “present-day proliferation of musical styles” is perhaps not new but rather the “last efflorescence of the post-Renaissance Western tradition” (1996, p. 207). Instead, the transformation is perhaps better illustrated as a snowball gathering new music materials from diverse cultures without ever getting rid of the old ones. In addition, technology has made the utilization of global musical materials more accessible and the construction of musical materials more rapid and user friendly. As a consequence, musical materials available for use in music education are now as vast as they are diverse.

While music education advocacy has gained some ground through the efforts of organizations like MENC, including the creation of the National Standards in Music (see Reimer, 2005) and a resolution in congress outlining the importance of music education in 2007 (American Music Conference, 2007), there is little consensus among music educators supporting a particular philosophy of music education (Mark & Gary, 1999). Music education in the United States faces a peculiar crisis in that very few high school students participate in music classes. Reimer (2007) suggests this number to be somewhere between 9 and 12 percent. Perhaps one of the strongest arguments against the role of traditional materials in music education is that it is simply unjustifiable because so few students actually listen to or participate in it. Reimer (2005) stated, “the gap between what teachers consider musically valuable and what students/communities regard as such has tended to be intolerably wide” (p. 248). He continued to argue that current practices based in Western classical tradition were a problem that needed to be addressed, citing a “reality gap causing many programs to be painfully out of touch with student desires and enthusiasm” (p. 249). While his point was well made, the potential value of traditional materials for all American students was somewhat compromised by this statement, outlining the need to further examine how musical materials were perceived by all concerned.

Contextualizing the Problem

In order to contextualize the philosophical bases for including or excluding musical materials in the music curriculum, it is important to consider that these arguments are rooted in broader philosophies of current practices in diverse social structures. These philosophies are as diverse as styles of music, but many are centered

around diverse cultural and intercultural perspectives. These perspectives range from Reimer's (2005) aesthetic philosophy of synergism between diverse philosophies in music education to position papers that highlight the importance of countering social power structures through non-traditional strategies and materials in music education (e.g., Jaffurs, 2004).

The problems related to the aesthetic and social valuations of music are found throughout music education research literature. For example, Regelski (2005) suggests that praxialism, rather than aesthetics, can provide the perceived social value necessary for promoting music education. Still other emerging philosophies involving social identity (e.g., Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003) and perceived musical meaning through group interaction with particular musical styles serve to add more perspectives for consideration in the music curriculum. These philosophies (and others) often consider traditional practices involving classical music materials to be out of touch with student interests and creative potential. Jorgensen (1997) perhaps offers a more sympathetic stance between aesthetics and social constructs by stating that, "Music is corporately and individually understood. It is limited to, and transcends, cultural context" (p. 36).

The most obvious example of the perceived conflicts between musical materials in the literature involves the role of Western classical music. Jorgensen (1997) described how one of the traditional (and highly controversial) arguments for Western classical musical materials holds that the evolutionary process of music composition is a "progressive rationalization toward its epitome—Western classical music" (p. 43). This stance is, in turn, challenged by the complex, non-linear progression of music throughout history, the difficulty in evaluating the quality of music out of its social context, and the

presence of other types of musics that rival the complexity of Western classical music (Jorgensen, 1997).

The acceleration of cultural change through increased technologies and globalization has also presented a range of new challenges for current practices in music education. For Jorgensen (1997), the prevailing musical considerations include formal vs. contextual analysis of musical works, the hierarchy of musical traditions, transmitting historical wisdom vs. transforming social structures, contextual interaction with music vs. continuity (life-long learning), making and receiving music, and musical understanding vs. pleasure. Additionally, assuming the music educator has adopted a philosophy of his or her own, the gulf between theory and practice presents yet another set of problems.

Jorgensen (1997) contends:

Although educators, among them musicians, have sought the high road to musical understanding, it is unlikely that such a way is possible. Rather, music educators may need to be content with admitting a variety of ways in which people come to know music. It is unlikely that any practice can ever be based on any one coherent set of assumptions—or that any one set of assumptions constitutes a philosophy or theory capable of only one set of concomitant practices. (p. 90)

Sloboda (2001) also highlights the importance of realizing the various ways in which we interact with music:

Music education in schools cannot function effectively without an implicit agreement between stakeholders (e.g., teachers, student, parents, government, etc.) about what it is for. The ‘meaning of music’ is a constantly shifting function of the discourses of these diverse groups . . . (p. 249)

He identifies seven cultural trends (multiculturalism, youth culture, electronic communication, feminism, secularism, niche cultures, and postmodernism) that have moved the focus of music education away from the traditional foundation of studying classical artworks, and suggests that current practices in music education are insufficiently effective in meeting the needs of students.

Additionally, Jorgensen (1996) identifies the problematic nature of artistic values and cultural significance, and how these can affect music education philosophy:

Searching for musical value, for example, may emphasize the sophisticated classical musics; interrelating music with common, everyday life may emphasize the more accessible folk and popular musics. (p. 6)

But these philosophical challenges are not new. Jorgensen (1996) points out that Aristotle acknowledged difficulty justifying the arts in that they existed without significant purpose, while Plato viewed the arts as a “fundamental means of cognitive access to higher abstract thought and moral judgment” (Jorgensen, 1996, p. 1). Her solution for justifying the arts in general education is to address the challenges to the vulnerabilities of the diverse philosophical bases of music education. These diverse bases are reflected in how music educators select materials for use in the classroom.

Addressing the Problem

In the classroom, this collection of diverse musical materials is too broad to represent in the allotted time, and educators choose not only the materials they will use, but continually exercise the philosophical criteria for the selection of those materials. Inherent in each selection of these musical materials is the fundamental question of what the music is *for*, allowing for the possibility of one musical material to function toward a

variety of philosophical ends. However, some of these ends come in conflict with one another, making the selection of musical materials for the classroom not only a question of what to include, but what to exclude. As such, the nature of selecting musical materials is problematic, and becomes more so as the diversity of the students increases.

Philosophical bases of music education that address these and other problems are almost as numerous as the music materials they represent. Bennett Reimer, Christopher Small, Estelle Jorgensen, David Elliott, and numerous others have produced a wealth of literature addressing not only diverse problems in the philosophy of music and music education, but by providing potential solutions for these problems within social contexts, including the role of music education in considering issues related to diversity and social justice. Consequently, music education has become a source of promoting an increasingly wide number of cultural groups. These groups include cultures categorized by socioeconomic status, geography, race, gender, or even sexual orientation. Each of these uniquely defined groups expresses interest in the promotion or preservation of particular types of music materials of communal interest (Elliott, 2007). Inevitably, some groups have expressed a disinterest in (or even objection to) *other* musical materials that do not reflect the values of their culture. Music education, on the other hand, has traditionally followed a track that has “poorly represented the many musical roles in our culture” (Reimer, 2007, p. 21). It is a problem that deserves a closer look to determine how these objections are warranted, and in what contexts.

Before continuing, however, it is important to note that theoretical frameworks for musical meaning and value are not being overlooked. In general, it is assumed that the reader considers that musical materials are theoretically not (sound) objects, but

constructs that operate individually within cultures (i.e., Fiske, 1996; Elliott, 1995), and what I contend to be constructs that may operate individually *among* cultures. For the purpose of this discussion, *musical materials* (sheet music, recordings, concerts, composing, improvising, and all other performance modes and mediums in action) are treated as objects and/or actions that are considered to be musical within and among cultures. Musical materials are chosen for use in the classroom to promote various perceived valuations of these materials by performing or listening to them. It becomes apparent that there is further disagreement about what the value of music *is* both within and among cultures, which complicates arguments pertaining to what music is *for*.

Method

The method for this philosophical inquiry is primarily synopsis and analysis (Jorgensen, 1992), and is limited by its holistic and selective approach to a large and redundant body of literature. However, this approach is valuable in that the arguments related to the selection of musical materials are often narrowly focused and discussed without contextual sympathy, or they are discussed without sufficient consideration of the problems associated with each position (Reimer, 2005). Polarized literature has been selected at times to make these limitations more obvious. In addition, the inquiry is focused exclusively on Western philosophical bases of music education, and does not purposely include considerations from non-Western philosophical foundations.

This inquiry is intended to assist the all music teachers develop a more comprehensive philosophical approach in the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom. As such, it is important to lay out a framework for discussion. In Chapter 2, the role of musical materials as they relate to problems of inclusion and exclusion for

diverse groups is discussed. Chapter 3 addresses the problem of groups being contextualized within the postmodern framework of multiculturalism and social justice. The third part of the inquiry (Chapter 4) considers philosophical perspectives of valuing musical materials from the perspectives of the individual, the group, and the universal. Chapter 5 examines strategies for the selection of musical materials as they relate to the philosophical perspectives of Bennett Reimer, Estelle Jorgensen, and David Elliott. Finally, a discussion of musical materials as they relate to perspectives of musical quality is presented in Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 summarizes the arguments by tying together the various perspectives associated with musical materials in order to achieve greater contextual understanding of the problems in the hopes of moving toward their eventual solutions. Practical suggestions for future practices of inclusion and exclusion of musical materials in the classroom are presented.

If comprehensive music education is a goal, then music educators need to find greater agreement about what materials are appropriate for use in the classroom. This inquiry is designed to move toward a better understanding on how cultural and musical criteria are valued as factors for the selection of musical materials.

Chapter 2

Contextualizing Inclusion and Exclusion

In the past, my own thoughts as an ensemble director when considering musical materials for inclusion or exclusion in the classroom were always related to the quality of the material itself. Or, I might pick a piece to perform because it fit well into a diverse program. But the word diverse to me generally meant allegro vs. adagio, Renaissance vs. Romantic, or some textural or performance occasion consideration. I did not typically include a piece because it was from a particular region, or because it represented a particular group, even though I did include many works considered to be culturally diverse for those reasons.

For music educators, relying on past assumptions about materials is problematic, especially those assumptions rooted in Western musical frameworks. However, current assumptions about musical materials are also problematic. Diverse labeling, rising commercial consumerism, and increasing social diversity have influenced student interest in musical materials. These and numerous other considerations affect the way students interact with materials in the classroom, and each perspective presents new challenges to the selection of musical materials.

Perhaps a reasonable approach can be made toward developing a greater understanding of the diverse criteria appropriate to the selection of musical materials by considering the problematic nature of labels as they are perceived to be socially charged in some way. Labels sometimes make the conversation about musical materials more difficult, and create consternation where it is more often than not counterproductive.

The Problem of Labeling Musical Materials

The diverse categorizations of musical materials are valuable in the facilitation of the diverse utilizations of musical materials. Unfortunately, the use of cultural labels can be perceived as somewhat problematic in music education. In the culturally diverse classrooms of the United States, the inclusion of the music of one culture (or group) would seem to make necessary the inclusion of all cultural musics unless some other label is shown to be more appropriate.

Consider, for instance, the calculated use of labels in the current political climate in the United States. President Barak Obama has been carefully labeled as the first *black* president (even though his mother is *white*) which suits the desires of the society towards concepts of social equality based on the injustices of the past. Additionally, the first *Latino woman* Supreme Court justice was sworn into office, similarly representative of equality for socially underrepresented groups in America's cultural elite. The significance of these labels is further enhanced when considering societies' view that vice president Joe Biden need not be labeled as a *white male*. Rather, it is understood that Mr. Biden belongs to the historically dominant culture, and the labels are not conducive to supporting societal strides toward social justice (see Small, 1996; Greene, 1988). Perhaps many better examples could be drawn, but the immediate concern is the understanding that labels are used not only as descriptors, but as tools toward social and political objectives (Reimer, 2005).

It would then likewise be appropriate to consider that if educators decide to study and perform the music of China (monumentally diverse in its own right) they should consider whether or not to also include the music of every other country as well, using

socio-political and geographical criteria as the central criteria for labeling music. The same could be said utilizing other descriptive, socially stratified labels for the incorporation of a wide variety of popular musics in the classroom (i.e., if one includes rock, one should include country and Broadway as well). It becomes obvious here that there are too many musical materials, categorizations, and cultures to allow adequate representation of each in music education in order to obtain equitable representation. Once the teacher has selected the musical material for use in the classroom, all other materials have essentially been excluded. If the teacher does not have a clear set of criteria for determining the inclusion of musical materials in the classroom, realizing the social attachments to each, these selections can be perceived to imply cultural inequity, even when it is not intended. Additionally, by labeling music as belonging to or the product of one particular group of people over another, the distinction between *we* and *them* becomes significant enough to warrant conversation about *whose* music is included in the classroom, rather than *what* music is included in the classroom.

As American classrooms become more diverse, conflicts around the selection of musical materials are less avoidable. Inevitably, some group will be underrepresented by the materials presented in the classroom, and the dominant culture is perceived as being either irrelevant to or imposed upon the unwilling (e.g., religious texts in choral music). In the search for relevant materials, the criteria for relevance are not necessarily shared by all involved. As a result, music is categorized, classified, or otherwise labeled according to dissimilar criteria. These labels, while necessary, create diverse problems for educators.

The Problem of Classification Labels

The labeling of music is necessary in that it helps individuals sort through the multitude of musical materials available for consumption. Each label provides information about the material it categorizes, and allows it to be evaluated by the listener before actually listening to it. On the internet, websites like iTunes allow individuals to search general keywords like *rock* or *classical* and their subcategories. Online retailers, like Amazon, help consumers by listing similar items purchased by others who have purchased the album under consideration. By doing so, even without a specific musical label, consumers are grouped by their purchasing habits.

Research in musical taste and preference divides individuals into groups based on a variety of criteria, ranging from socio-economic status to illegal drug use, thus labeling the listener along with the material in order to examine social or cultural correlations (e.g., Hargreaves & North, 2007). Music can also be categorized by the music listener's perspective of the music in action rather than the traditionally defining characteristics of the musical materials themselves. For example, one study by Kim and Belkin (2002) asked 22 non-music experts to write words they would use to describe or search the internet for the music samples they were asked to listen to. The researchers then grouped like terms, resulting in seven categorical approaches to descriptions of musical materials. Among the most frequently utilized categories were *emotions*, *nature*, *occasions*, and *neutral concepts*. *Musical features* were not utilized as frequently, and represented only 4% of the descriptions and 13% of the search terms. In every instance, the result of these categorizations helps to explain what the music is *for* from the views of the consumer.

In music education, the labeling of musical materials also takes place, although

emphasis may be placed on a different and uniquely inclusive set of criteria. For instance, in secondary music education in the United States, *choral* music can be inclusive of everything from a Bach chorale to a Michael Jackson pop arrangement. In traditional large ensembles, the performance medium alone generally provides the categorization criteria. A high school orchestra performs *orchestral* literature, which on the whole means nothing more than music written or arranged for an orchestra. These overwhelmingly inclusive labels for music categories are used primarily to facilitate the ensemble they are designed for rather than the stylistic preference of the student or the audience. A curious side effect of these broad types of categorizations of musical materials is the implied assumption that all of these materials are equally valuable for students, audiences, or toward some educational end, not to mention the assumption that the ensemble itself as a medium is valuable.

Other categorizations of musical materials presume similar values via a different set of criteria. In the last few decades, prominent attention has been given to diverse musical cultures, illuminating still yet another categorization for music; it's situatedness within a geographically, ethnically, or ideologically unique group of people. These categorizations (similar to studies in taste and preference) are more oriented toward social behaviors than the study of the musical material itself. One of the main goals of listening to these works is to develop an appreciation for, or understanding of, the cultures that produce the music. As the music appreciation movement of Western classical music in the middle of the 20th century in music education celebrated musical works of perceived significance, the celebration of diversity of musical materials has become conversely more important than the perceived musical value of the materials.

Still other labels are applied to help put music materials into categories. Among music educators, musical descriptions include adjectives pertaining to positive and negative perspectives of musical value, relevance, or quality. Music from this perspective can be seen in terms of relevance, and can include terms such as *esoteric* or *authentic*. These labels are useful in providing a way of describing the value of the music for society within a socio-political framework. The music materials are sorted according to the role they play within a diverse and economically stratified population like the United States. These labels indicate some social agenda or role whether positively or negatively perceived for the musical materials under consideration.

Additionally, the concept of music as an aesthetic art-object is often contrasted with the concept of music as an aesthetic art action (e.g., Elliott, 1995; Small, 1996), emphasizing the importance of the social relationship between musician and audience. These culturally understood musical relationships are valued within the structure of postmodernism, and have “become strongly political for many thinkers, rebalancing the age-old aesthetic topics of form, practice, and cultural context in the direction of that aspect of context having to do with social justice” (Reimer, 2005, p. 53). The valuation of musical materials from these perspectives becomes somewhat problematic.

Perhaps there are numerous additional criteria for labeling musical materials that have not been mentioned, but the point has been made clear that there are multiple ways to describe musical materials, including evaluative assessments (utilizing diverse criteria) by individuals and groups. The presence of these labels provides the opportunity to discuss how perceptions of culturally implied (geographical, historical, or philosophical) ownership of musical materials (i.e., Western classical, Indian, hip-hop, etc.), creating

problems for music educators in the classroom as they select materials. As a consequence of these and other categorizations, the selection of some musical materials instead of other musical materials at least implies value judgments.

The Problem of Consumerism

The problem of labeling music is further complicated by consumer culture, where personal taste and group preferences are inseparable from the musical products that seemingly permeate every waking moment of the lives of contemporary students, regardless of their cultural orientation. Jorgensen (2003) contends that, “Popular culture in all of its forms sold by the media so silences other forms of musical expression that they are not known by young and old alike” (p. xi). Hence, consumer culture provides yet another set of criteria for educators to consider when choosing musical materials for use in the classroom. Should the music teacher seek to provide more opportunities to explore current trends in popular music? What materials should be rejected to accommodate these currently relevant materials? More importantly, to what end and for whom are these materials useful? It is necessary to consider the problems that stem from these questions.

Christopher Small outlines the problems inherent in even asking such questions as these: questions conceived in traditions of Western music education involving hierarchical thinking and concepts of the “art object” (1996, p. 149). For example, he describes the efforts of John Cage to resist earlier concepts of form in favor of promoting the act of making art. In essence, effort is made to perceive of Western music appropriately, according to a set of philosophical criteria. Small (1996) states:

Art remains a commodity whose production remains in the hands of experts, which we purchase when we feel the need of it, and in whose making we have no

more hand than we have in the manufacture of our breakfast cereal. We can perceive not that a true regeneration of western music, and western society, can come only when we can restore the power of creation to each individual in our society. (p. 166)

Obviously, the author has a clear vision for what music is for, and continues to make a compelling case for the importance of creativity. The purpose for the discussion of this brief example is not to argue the value of creativity, but to assess the valuation of creativity that is assumed to be the proper one according to Small. The valuation and definition of creativity itself (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) is situated within the process of selecting musical materials for use in the classroom as a function of music education. Our culture helps us make decisions about how we value creativity, and what creativity is within music education. These decisions are influenced by consumer culture.

The consumer culture has been criticized by many philosophers. Among them, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) describe the deception of choice as seen in the categorization and labeling of the consumer rather than choice being representative of any real differences in art. At the same time, American educators are very interested in the desires of their students, which validate these choices as being significant precisely in terms of their differences as seen in the selection of musical materials for consumption. Thus, consumer culture is wrapped in issues related to culture, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate one from the other for consideration. Simply put, it is problematic to value the utilization of musical materials for students based on what they consume on a regular basis.

The Problem of Social Diversity

In contemporary society, diversity itself is difficult to categorize. The musical interests of students are not only infinitely diverse, but fluid, and students quickly immerse themselves in one type of music after another. With an array of music available and easily accessible, sometimes the obscurity of a musical material may be its primary criteria for valuation. At other times, trends and friends are responsible for more choices regarding the selection of musical materials than the individual (see Hargreaves & North, 1997). As such, these musical activities are indeed primarily social in nature, and have very little to do with considerations of the musical material itself, instead of relying on the perceived value of the music as it supports the current social objective for the student.

A multicultural perspective in its global context understands unity in terms of equality among diverse groups. As such, issues of social justice have become a critical part of any field of study, and the criteria for making musical decisions are cultural rather than musical, leaving other approaches to music evaluation to play a secondary role, dependent entirely on the cultural perspective for its significance in the lives of individuals. Additionally, the Western philosophies of the aesthetic properties of musical materials (see Small, 1996) are deemphasized in favor of issues of social justice and equality, even though they are not in opposition outside of their elitist associations. Or, these traditional musics are considered to be irrelevant in contemporary culture, citing the diversity of culture over time.

Rather than understanding the musical materials utilized in traditional ensembles in classrooms in the United States as no longer being relevant, it may be more appropriate to say that the culture collectively has *decided* to make them irrelevant whether by

informed choice or ignorant indifference to some greater end. Many views of music educators are based on socio-political beliefs, and reflect concepts related to the ideal society. Unfortunately, musical materials or perspectives that do not coincide with these views are contextualized as relevant or not based on these views. The goal here is not to vilify these decisions of relevance and the multiplicity of variables associated with them, but rather to protect any inappropriately attached music materials from being thrown out unnecessarily in order to promote inclusion of other musical materials.

In order to attract more diverse students to music education, the justified move toward the education of the music *afficionado* (Reimer, 2005) has gained ground in the literature primarily through the socio-political ideologies of contemporary thought (e.g.,; Greene, 1988; Jorgensen, 2003; Small, 1996), citing a battle against “the experts’ domination, not only of our music but also of our very lives” (Small, 1996, p. 214). Whether or not this ironically romantic view of the struggle in music education is accurate may be critical to the evolution of the parameters educators utilize to construct the music education curriculum. Multiculturalism addresses these and other issues related to social diversity, and is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Summary

In order to better promote music education and improve communication between educators, students, and the communities in which they share musical experiences, the problematic nature of the diverse labels assigned to materials needs to be addressed. Jorgensen (2003) argues, “teachers disagree about their objectives, especially since they serve an increasingly diverse constituency, and society expects more of its schools than ever before” (p. 3). While cultural, historic, stylistic, and geographic labels of musical

materials are valuable, they alone are inadequate to promote music itself as a viable part of the curriculum within diverse groups who have differing socio-political views. While celebrating diversity is valued by many as a postmodern approach in education in general, its application continues to be problematic among diverse disciplines in the Western culture. Nevertheless, some method of choosing musical materials for use in the classroom is needed to make sure groups are not excluded because of the nature of the musical materials being utilized. Perhaps it is better to reconsider the diverse applications of music in the collective human experience (both current and historical) rather than focusing entirely on the geographic and socio-political diversity of musical materials within and among groups.

This is not possible unless the criterion for the labeling and valuation of musical materials enjoys greater acceptance among educators, students, audiences, and professionals. Additionally, a better understanding is needed of the value of commercial music, folk music, and art music materials available for use in the classroom. In order to move toward these objectives, it is important to reevaluate the ideological and socio-political goals of music educators, and then use these goals as a framework for the application of musical materials in the classroom by developing a more comprehensive approach to the selection of music materials for use in the classroom.

To support a framework for further consideration, it is important to understand how postmodernism has influenced music education. Current practices in music education have led Reimer (2005) toward a synergistic approach to developing the curriculum. Jorgensen (2003) prefers a dialectic approach incorporating “this with that” strategies for transforming music education. Both are examples of how music educators

have dealt with issues rooted in postmodern thinking. Still others have diverse views on the subject. These postmodern views are important because they seek to determine the rules by which knowledge is obtained, and the nature of knowledge itself. It is impossible to consider any argument for musical materials without understanding the rules of engagement. This is perhaps the most difficult task, simply because the nature of postmodernism is somewhat elusive. Nevertheless, postmodern thought is a driving force behind contemporary socio-political views in the United States and is a key variable toward finding common ground inclusive and stable enough for launching an argument. Furthermore, it at least serves to explore for the reader one of the root causes of some problems in selecting musical materials in music education.

Chapter 3

Postmodernism, Multiculturalism, and Musical Materials

In order to argue what music education is or should be for, it is important to lay out a framework for making arguments. If the framework cannot be established, then music educators are forever resigned to taking sides with little impact. Reimer (2005) makes a valiant and successful effort toward this end in his philosophy of music education by attempting to develop a synergistic approach between various points of view. Jorgensen (2003) develops arguments in *Transforming Music Education* by summarizing society, art, and education into “a dialectical, this-with-that solution” to furthering music education (p. 12). Small (1996) works from his perspective of a flawed Western ideology into a more society-oriented framework. There are many other perspectives as well, but one of the unifying features of all of these philosophical approaches is the need to address music education, at least in part, within a postmodern context. Therefore, it is critical to understand to some degree the concepts provided by postmodernism before any attempt to justify the use and consequent non-use of musical materials in the classroom. The discussion of postmodernism is important in that it provides a philosophical foundation for multiculturalism and issues of social justice that are relevant to current educational practices in the United States and around the globe.

Multiculturalism and social justice are directly related to the selection of musical materials in the classroom, and provide philosophical bases for the inclusion of certain materials for many music educators (Elliott, 1995). But there is some concern that music educators should, “move with caution when attempting to translate multicultural rhetoric

into curricular reality and action” (Gonzo, 1993, p. 52). The following discussion of multiculturalism and social justice in a postmodern framework explores some of the most fundamental philosophical perspectives of these positions and their impact on music education.

Before continuing, however, it is important to characterize the brief explanations of these concepts that follow. The literature on postmodernism, multiculturalism, and social justice is vast, diverse, complex, and somewhat volatile, and any hope for a comprehensive or conclusive summary is an illusion. Instead, I simply attempt to provide a brief introduction that shows the problems as well as solutions postmodernism creates for the selection of musical materials in the classroom.

Postmodernism

Perhaps the best place to begin is to understand the context of the word *modern*, and its function as an “ism,” or belief system. Modernism is better thought of as an analysis of the development of a belief system over time rather than any particularly tangible methodology it may embrace. Knowledge, as understood within the modernist framework, is primarily objective in nature. Contained within the modernist belief system are the primary perceptions of the objectivity of science and the existence of universal rather than cultural morality. In addition, art was considered apart from its cultural constraints (Harvey, 1989). Modernism also embraces concepts of rational thought and universals (Rosenau, 1992). In essence, modern thought shaped the industrial world as experienced in the United States, and consequently the institutions of which it is made, including educational philosophies, curriculums, and methodologies.

Postmodernism fundamentally can be seen as a reaction or an alternative to

modernism, even if only by the structure of the word itself. However, attempts to define postmodernism are rejected by some postmodernists (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Elliott (2001), instead, gracefully begins approaching his working definition of postmodernism with what it isn't:

Postmodernism does not refer to a systematic set of premises and strategies; it is not a cohesive philosophy; it is not a method of inquiry; it is not an identifiable cultural movement. (p. 34)

The nature of postmodernism here is somewhat elusive as an incohesive philosophical construct with a general tendency to filter all thought through itself.

Post-modernism, then, can be understood as challenging some of these previously held belief systems of modernism (namely the concept of objective observation).

However, these belief systems exist inextricably at the same time (McGowan, 1991), producing increasingly complex relationships between historical perception of reality, philosophical frameworks of reality, and contemporary practice. Beck (1993) points out that reality is neither completely objective nor completely constructed:

We mold reality in accordance with our needs, interests, prejudices, and cultural traditions . . . again and again reality surprises us (as modern science has shown) in ways that compel us to modify our ideas. (pp. 3-4)

It soon becomes apparent that each and every consideration in relation to musical materials for use in the classroom is subjected to the frameworks of the modern and postmodern perspectives. Even considering music as a material at all needs consideration and clarification before proceeding further. It becomes appropriate then to look more deeply at how these problems have been addressed by others. Since culture is considered

to be the lens through which all knowledge is filtered (Beck, 1993), the primary goal here is to clarify what culture is, and its role in music education as seen through the eyes of music educators and philosophers in postmodern contexts. It is also important to consider how issues related to multiculturalism and social justice function as products of modern or postmodern thought. For music education, the impact of postmodernism can be felt primarily through the globalization of educational philosophy, and the consequent education of globalism through the promotion of ideological frameworks including cultural diversity and human rights.

Globalism

Globalism addresses, among other things, the many ways in which societies, governments, and individuals interact and do business, and is a byproduct of the end of the Cold War and the spread of democracy (McCarthy, 2004). Globalism, while providing a variety of international solutions, also presents a number of problems. Some problems inherent in globalization include colliding values, economies, and social injustice (McCarthy, 2004). Individuals and groups become borderless, culture is redefined, and the ideologies of these diverse cultures are viewed within social contexts. As education embraces globalism, loyalty to the community, and consequently, the nation, is compromised (Colwell, 2004). Because globalism calls for curricular reform in education, all educators should be aware of this power struggle and its political implications:

Today's struggle to control the educational curriculum is a complex political issue with every topic having at least two sides, both attractive to its constituency and both meritorious in their own way. In the year 2000, the dominant sides are

designated liberal and conservative. Although these designations need not relate to political parties, political connections can be made. (Colwell, 2004, p. 18)

Globalism has become an increasingly significant influence on education in the United States, offering both problems and solutions for music education.

Multiculturalism

As a product of globalism, multiculturalism permeates political, entertainment, and educational institutions (Campbell, 1993). It is a pervasive ideology that has both positively and negatively perceived political and educational values, which are largely determined by the political perspective of the viewer. Multiculturalism has become a formidable ideological reference for promoting a more diverse music education curriculum. Music, as a global phenomenon, is especially situated to serve this philosophy for educating society in a diverse and open world where broad-based, open-minded approaches are essential components of the music curriculum (Fung, 1998).

The International Society for Music Education (ISME) Policy on Musics of the World's Cultures has promoted the incorporation of diverse cultural musics into the global curriculum by developing guidelines supporting these ideals. Included within these principles are concepts of multiculturalism:

It is well known that music often plays a major role in the integration of culture and the maintenance of ethnic identity as well as in mediation among cultures in contact. Further, music has been proved to be of special usefulness in the solution of social and political problems in inter-ethnic and multi-ethnic societies.

(Lundquist et al., 1998, p. 18)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO), a political organization originally concerned with the “homogenizing effects of Western popular music,” has also played a major role in promoting the diversity of music and its preservation (McCarthy, 2004, p. 24). In 2005, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in Paris produced a document outlining its position. Included in this document are a variety of multicultural ideologies, including the celebration of cultural diversity and the promotion of social justice (UNESCO, 2005).

The philosophical and praxial concepts of multiculturalism have been investigated in numerous areas of research, and there is some disagreement about its meaning (Miralis, 2006). The term *culture* has evolved in its meaning over the last few hundred years to be “a complex integrated system of beliefs and behaviors that may be both rational and nonrational; culture is a totality of values, beliefs, and behaviors common to a large group of people” (Tiedt & Tiedt, 1995, p. 10). Therefore, cultural makeup includes, “age, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, and political affiliation, among others” (Miralis, 2006, p. 55). Multiculturalism can be seen as a celebration of diversity within a pluralistic culture. The multiculturalist is viewed as being cosmopolitan, having an expanded view incorporating tolerance of the world and its inhabitants (Vaugeois, 2007). This view has been widely accepted and exercised in higher education circles around the world (Krannawitter, 2003).

Multiculturalism includes concerns of cultural inequality. Banks (2004) outlined the dimensions of multicultural education as “content integration,” “the knowledge construction process,” “prejudice reduction,” “equity pedagogy,” and “empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 4). However, perceptions of these dimensions

vary. McLaren (1994) defined these various perspectives as liberal, conservative, or left-liberal multiculturalism. The use of these classifications is important for McLaren and others who share the concern that “multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda can be just another form of accommodation to the larger social order” (McLaren, 1994, p. 53). While not all proponents of multiculturalism share this perspective, it warrants further consideration.

Equality is achieved in part by reflecting and representing cultural diversity in the schools. In addition, social reconstructionists desire to promote diversity while teaching students to challenge social inequality. From this perspective, the curriculum includes the promotion of human rights, ranging from respect for diversity of lifestyle to a just distribution of power and income. Similarly, multiethnic education seeks to break the barriers between inferior and dominant groups in part by providing equal opportunities and promoting ethnic diversity. Article 16 of the 2005 UNESCO Convention in Paris illustrates these ideals:

Developed countries shall facilitate cultural exchanges with developing countries by granting, through the appropriate institutional and legal frameworks, preferential treatment to artists and other cultural professionals and practitioners, as well as cultural goods and services from developing countries. (p. 9)

In music education, limited research has been devoted to the uses of appropriate terminology when addressing diverse musics. A review of the literature on the terms, *multicultural*, *multiethnic*, and *world music education* by Miralis (2006) outlines various titles in music education research that incorporate these terms, as well as terms used interchangeably with multicultural such as *cross-cultural* and *intercultural*, and terms

used interchangeably with multicultural music such as *ethnic music*, *indigenous music*, and *world music*. Miralis (2006) points out that this variety in terminology may be a result of diverse approaches of incorporating multiculturalism in music education. While some educators may view these terms as having identical meanings, each has its own philosophical approach in practice. World music, originally contrived as a tool of differentiation from Western classical music, has come to mean various types of music from around the world. In this light, global music is presumed to be more accurate, differentiating it from the phenomenon of instruments and styles present beyond their culture of origin (Miralis, 2006). Multicultural music education carries with it a philosophy that is more focused on societal equality, whereas music educators are generally more concerned with teaching the music of various ethnic groups (Koza, 1996; Norman, 1994).

Philosophical challenges to postmodern arguments

Modern Western philosophy is founded, at least in part, on the premise that humans exist in a reality that they did not create, that this existence has order (laws of nature), and that each may judge what is likely to be true. Challenges to modernism are rooted in these premises, and focus on their indemonstrability. From the postmodern perspective, the argument is that the freedom to judge is not really freedom if it can be shown to have a cause. The pursuit of what causes human behavior (rather than the freedom to judge) then, became the focal point of philosophical inquiry across diverse disciplines, as seen in the writings of Darwin, Freud, Marx, and a range of others (Krannawitter, 2003). In other words, humans make choices because something (economy, psychology, biology, etc.) *caused* them to make that choice, hence the

freedom to judge for oneself is not demonstrable.

Krannawitter (2003) points out that Jean Jaques Rousseau rejected classical thought in the 18th century, and that his writings suggested that language (as a precursor to thought) is an effect of causes that produced it (environmental and cultural). The field of anthropology is born of these ideals, and assumes that reason cannot of itself (as a cultural product) produce universal truths about how humans should live. These are demonstrated through cultural diversity, and since objectivity is varied, the values of one culture are not comparable to another. From this philosophy, multiculturalism has its birth as a non-judgmental ideology (Krannawitter, 2003).

However, at least for the staunch individualist, the multiculturalist is presented with a series of perceived problems that should be addressed. One of these is that multiculturalism in and of itself is the product of a single culture. For example, cultural practices in homogeneous societies, such as tribal Africa, the Balkans, and North Korea do not require diversity, meaning that “multiculturalism is, itself, not multicultural” (Krannawitter, 2003, p. 2). Additionally, multiculturalism, as it tends to deny the universal nature of individual humans, overlooks culture as a universal product of individual human nature. And, multiculturalism arrives at the objective truth of its own premise while denying the feasibility of objective truth, and cannot support itself as being truer than non-multiculturalism (Krannawitter, 2003).

Academics like Krannawitter (2003) who challenge multiculturalism in principle present a variety of additional arguments. One of these arguments is based on human history and achievement as it relates to the acquisition of knowledge and its applications. From an evolutionary point of view, this knowledge requires objective evaluation. This

ideology proposes that one idea can be better than another, and therefore, these ideas have measurable value. As humans evolved, technological advances (e.g., hunting with weapons vs. hunting with hands, planting crops vs. gathering, etc.) improved quality of life for the individual and ascertained worth of creation, use, and defense of that knowledge, hence the value of knowledge. This Western philosophy of knowledge is founded on reason, individual rights, and science and technology, which result in a better quality of life (Locke, 2002). Multiculturalism, on the other hand, promotes the celebration of diverse knowledge regardless of its value outside of its own cultural boundary, and ceases to evaluate knowledge altogether (Schwartz, 2002).

Another argument sustains that multiculturalism, although an agent of pluralism, supports separating people into categories to substantiate inclusiveness and entitlement, although by definition it promotes exclusion (Vaugeois, 2007). Bannerji (2000) suggests that multiculturalism serves “as an ideology, both in the sense of a body of content, claiming that ‘we’ or ‘they’ are this or that kind of cultural identities, as well as an epistemological device for occluding the organization of the social” (p. 6). From this perspective, multiculturalism is a Western ideology that supports inclusiveness without referencing whom is being included (Spelman, 1988). Differentiation between studying other cultures and how we construct those cultures within hierarchical relationships is essential to exposing the seemingly innocent nature of multiculturalism (Vaugeois, 2007).

In the education literature, multiculturalism has been seen (although scarcely) as an agent of socio-political agendas that threatens to indoctrinate rather than educate students. In Australia for example, some view multiculturalism as a politically correct infiltration of virtually every subject taught in the schools. As cultural diversity is

celebrated and promoted, the European tradition based Judeo-Christian ethics are scrapped, even though they created and stabilized the current political system based on human rights, law, and tolerance (Donnelly, 2005).

Volk (1997) outlines some of these philosophical challenges to multiculturalism as well, but gives little thought to those who criticize the implications of multiculturalism. For example, consider the following:

Other critics have commented on what they see as the lack of intellectual rigor in multicultural education. They also feel that multiculturalism provides as easy solution to minority student underachievement, and in some cases even see it as a “politically correct” expedient without much substance. On the other hand, proponents say that these critics really fear multiculturalism because it poses a threat to the “American way of life,” or at least the current status quo. (p. 7)

Statements like these reinforce the current air of the assumed correctness of multiculturalism, and tend to treat arguments against multiculturalism as short-sighted. On the other hand, this quote does accurately portray some of the accusatory language found in various articles both for and against multiculturalism, which is more oriented to the point at hand. Still, the vast majority of the literature available on multiculturalism does not deal with these challenges. Rather, it is assumed that multiculturalism is the appropriate lens with which to view the world. The premise that knowledge is socially constructed seems to be the only universal conclusion that is possible, making it somewhat difficult to criticize.

In contrast with multiculturalism, individualism places primary emphasis on individual ambition and self-interest. While human rights are important to the

individualist, the perspective on human rights comes from a philosophy centered on objectivity and reason. The Ayn Rand Institute (ARI) promotes these and other ideals based on the writings of Ayn Rand (1905–1982) through research and various publications. Individualists believe in the principles of capitalism and reject moral relativism, and advocate an alternative approach to multiculturalism (Ayn Rand Institute, 2010).

Not surprisingly, both individualists and multiculturalists take strong and somewhat passionate positions in their writings. Extreme positions on either side exist, but mainstream philosophical and political thought favors multiculturalism in Western cultures, and perhaps the political implications inherent in the philosophical bases of multiculturalism and individualism ensure the continuation of these arguments.

It is important to consider, however, how the individual is perceived by both the individual and the multicultural perspectives. Both consider the individual to be important. Rather, it is the criteria for evaluating either the importance of the individual or what is important to the individual that creates this division. Multiculturalists tend to focus on the individual's value in terms of how the individual is situated within the group. From this perspective, the individual is helped (or harmed) by identifying with, relating to, or experiencing other groups (Banks, 1993).

For those who oppose multiculturalism outright, the value of the individual is the core of their philosophy. Pride is valid only through individual achievement, and ethnic pride is unmerited and is based on collectivism, where the individual exists only to enhance the whole. By taking pride in the group, the individual is devalued, and celebrates accomplishments that are not necessarily his/her own. This viewpoint supports

the achievement of the individual, and respect and admiration for that achievement irrespective of race, ethnicity, and so on (Bernstein, 2002). The other side of this argument proposes that this view is ahistorical, and as a product of modernism, is vilified through its association with slavery, personal interest, practices of exclusion, violence, and colonization (Vaugeois, 2007).

It is interesting to consider that both views are of Western origin, and both propose that the other is not the appropriate lens with which to view the world. Individualists believe that their view alone is correct, while from a cultural perspective, there is no right – only diverse perspectives. It is also worth mentioning that negative products of culture (e.g., violence, slavery) are utilized as a theoretical building block against Western thought, perhaps implying that these injustices are unique to Western philosophy alone. By doing so, these negative associations with Western ideology are used to define it as a corrupted system, and they do not allow for the possibility of corruption within a system, and tend to inadvertently soften perspectives of corruption in non-dominant societies.

Since multiculturalism strives to celebrate cultural differences, it requires the categorizing of cultures. As previously illustrated, cultures can be categorized by ideology, geography, values, ethnicity, and many other human traits and characters. One goal of cultural categorization is to define the differences between groups toward better understanding. A goal of multiculturalism is to celebrate these differences.

Celebrating cultural diversity certainly appears to be a good thing as it promotes the caring and understanding of the world around us. Not many would argue that humans are not better off trying to understand, tolerate, and learn from one another. However,

inextricably implicit within these ideals are the questions of what to understand, what to tolerate, and what to learn. Multiculturalism, if practiced at a superficial level, may or may not be adequate for the facilitation of these ideals.

One argument is that multiculturalism, if celebrating racial diversity, actually promotes racism rather than extinguishing it. Multiculturalism, from this point of view, is divisive, and limits students to viewing each other in terms of cultural rather than individual merit. This philosophy is based on the value of the individual's (regardless of cultural affiliation) intellect, free-will, and equality (Berliner & Hull, 2002). According to Hooks (1994):

. . . if “race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over the intimate relations with the other.” (as cited in Razack, 2006, p. 5)

The unfortunate result of using racial categorizations as a basis for equality is that these categorizations do not provide equality for either cultures or individuals. Instead, the various criteria for measuring equality are determined by, once again, some dominant cultural perspective.

Music Education and Multiculturalism

In music education, the promotion of world musics and musical diversity as a general theme has gone largely uncontested. Because musics of the world are so readily available through technology, musics of the world are being shared, fused, and reinvented. Music educators are desirous to enhance student experiences by fostering

awareness and understanding these rich and diverse musics, and music education research stands to benefit from studies incorporating more than one culture (Fung, 2005). Diverse cultures can better understand one another through music, and are seen as tools for expanding musical goals to include tolerance and solving shared problems (Elliott, 1995). Music is advocated by Fung (1998) as a tool for open-mindedness because of the general positive attitudes expressed toward music around the world. Music, although a universal phenomenon, contains elements that are confined to culture:

The foundations of musical structure and aesthetics in each type of music are fundamentally different, that is, non universal. All musics have a unique history and virtually all cultures have unique musical instruments. These musical nonuniversals constitute the core of mind-opening experience through music. (p. 119)

One result of these and other ideas is a call for a multicultural music curriculum that promotes tolerance. By helping people better understand and accept persons belonging to diverse cultures, open-minded individuals are to become be less biased (Fung, 1998).

However, multiculturalism as an ideological application does not necessarily end here. In diverse educational fields in the United States, academics opposed to multiculturalism infiltrating the classroom argue that Western culture is devalued when distorting the values of non-Western cultures by artificially elevating other cultures and their ideologies. Multiculturalism for some poses a threat to the stability and freedoms provided by the ideology that makes them possible. Curriculums in diverse subjects are seen as being distorted in order to make the world fit into the new Western ideology of diversity (Journon, 2004).

What emerges is an ideological pushing against traditional educational practices via the vehicle of multiculturalism. These traditional educational practices are perceived to be connected to knowledge based on colonialist European preeminence [Eurocentrism]. This view portrays Eurocentrism as a narrow view of the potential for education (Brand, 2003).

However, both multiculturalists and Eurocentrists seek to provide positive opportunities for students on the whole, so the question becomes how each assesses value. When assessing educational value, multiculturalists tend to identify with cultural group values, while Western idealists tend to identify with individual (or universal) values. These are issues that are steeped in political philosophies and present a multitude of additional problems for music educators to consider, some of which is addressed in the next chapter.

The most obvious dilemma for music educators comes in the choice of musical materials for use in the classroom. Because so many diverse musical materials are available and there is not enough time to incorporate them all, music educators are left to decide what materials to include. Multiculturalism presents a further dilemma, however, in that the question becomes *whose* musical materials to include. Inevitably, music education has the potential to become somewhat of a political tool for promoting cultural awareness and equality. It is not possible to include musical materials from *some* culture or *some* group if we choose to label and value musical materials in terms of their group association or identity.

Social Justice

Because multiculturalism had found widespread support around the world, music

educators incorporated multiculturalism as a tool for advocacy. By doing so, music education is linked to global issues of social justice. Vaugeois (2007) calls for a critical assessment of music educators' relationship with political philosophy:

Critical exploration of our positionality and our philosophical assumptions is vital to this enterprise. Without such critiques we risk getting caught up in discourses of charity-discourses that too often result in 'feel good' projects that valorize the giver while maintaining the inferior position of the receiver. Discourses of charity do not require us to ask how we have come to be in a position of 'superiority' relative to those defined as being 'in need.' In contrast, critiques that examine the ways legal, economic and social systems—and *the discourses that support them*—produce and maintain systemic injustice can help move us beyond the limits of charitable models. (163)

Vaugeois (2007) presents the argument that music educators need to use caution when assuming that musical projects are neutral when they may serve as a source of political contestation, and that music's abilities to "solidify group identities—race, class and gender included—are not generally taken into account" (p. 167). Multiculturalists strive to utilize multicultural musics to pursue musical development, assuming that, "not *understanding* difference is a primary cause for social conflict and . . . that participating in 'foreign' cultural practices will lead students to want greater equality" (p. 182). These assumptions are rooted in changing attitudes regarding inequality, but fail to address how people are treated differently, "as functions of inclusion or exclusion from identified groups" (p. 183). Students are therefore encouraged to broaden musical perspectives without necessarily identifying social and political concerns. The result is that

multiculturalism does not sufficiently explore the effects of diversity (Vaugeois, 2007).

Razack (2004) explains:

What makes the cultural differences approach so inadequate in various pedagogical moments is not so much that it is wrong, for people in reality are diverse and do have culturally specific practices that must be taken into account, but that its emphasis on cultural diversity too often descends, in a multicultural spiral, to a superficial reading of differences that makes power relations invisible and keeps dominant cultural norms in place. (p. 9)

To illustrate, Blacking (1987) warns against superficial representation of diverse folk songs, and expresses the importance of fighting social injustice, not only through social awareness, but through the potential of the individual. This modernist view of the individual rising above societal injustices tends to demonstrate equality as attainable through individual recognition rather than cultural evaluation. Social injustice is likewise denounced, although the criteria for evaluating these injustices are rooted in individual rather than cultural perspectives of human value. For music educators then, using diverse musical materials does not necessarily achieve the goals of the multicultural agenda.

Some educators have provided warnings against multiculturalism citing the problematic nature of cultural hegemony (originating in Marxism) and misunderstandings of culture itself. Rather than focusing on groups, some argue that music education should focus on human diversity and development. For example, one point of view argues that music and the arts are essentially aesthetically motivated activity grounded in the humanities, and believes that experiencing art, “holds potential for shaping the self in positive ways while simultaneously yielding insight into human existence and natural

phenomena” (Smith, 2006, p. 14). Implied in this scenario is a value perspective of art itself for the individual human in that, “Excellence in art implies the capacity of works of art at their best to intensify and enlarge the scope of human awareness” (p. 19). This view comes into conflict with some of the tenants of multiculturalism, and the author warns that postmodernism can be destructive in its radical form (Smith, 2006). A focus on the intrinsic nature of music is preferred, relying on the aesthetic power of music to “transcend its social and cultural analogues” (Blacking, 1987, p. 149). It takes little imagination to understand the difficulty in supporting such a position, yet most music educators devote much energy to supporting it.

But there are more practical problems for music educators. Colwell (2004) emphasizes how philosophies of globalization are weakening our abilities in music education assessment by dividing the assessment community, and argues that this trend could be detrimental to music education by stating:

A rich description of a fourth grade music class’ encounter with music will not convince a school board to raise the priority of music instruction or reward it with additional resources. Data that indicate that 90% of the students can read music or qualify for membership in the Vienna Philharmonic has a better chance. (pp. 21-22)

These examples may point toward some of the problems of multiculturalism for music educators. Educators who are concerned primarily with formalism or Western aesthetics may not embrace a multicultural agenda as readily as others who believe in music’s critical role in diverse cultures. Elliott (1995) suggests that music is inherently multicultural. As such, he states:

. . . any curriculum that is truly concerned with MUSIC education will fundamentally concerned with inducting students into a variety of Musics. Curriculum evaluation should therefore consider to what extent music education programs are multicultural—whether music programs are teaching MUSIC. (p. 291)

He continues to describe and critique six types of multicultural music curricula: *assimilationist, amalgamationist, open-society, insular, modified, and dynamic*. Similarly, Volk (1997) arrives at the conclusion that music education should “find a workable philosophy of multicultural music education” (p. 15).

In an article entitled, “Socializing Music Education,” David Elliott (2007) advocates social justice as an agenda for music education with a laundry list of victims of socio-political injustices, and the role musical materials and organizations played in providing relevant solutions. Based partly on music’s power to advocate for social justice, promotes a new agenda for music education. He states:

In order to “socialize and justice(!)” music education theoretically and practically, I believe we first need to re-conceive and mobilize music education as a *social movement*. What this requires, on the broadest level, is that we participate actively in social coalitions for educational justice . . . We need, for example, to empower our students to make music *for* social justice. (p. 84)

He continues to support his agenda, however, by criticizing other philosophical positions:

To activate music education as and for social change, our profession will need to surrender longstanding theoretical assumptions that, having nothing to do with social justice, block our advance. One such assumption is the aesthetic notion that

music consists of works whose value is intrinsic—in the sounds themselves. (p. 85)
More about this is discussed later in Chapter 4. For now it is sufficient to recognize the polarizing potential of postmodernism in education.

Summary

Multiculturalism can be more than a sharing and understanding of diverse cultures. If applied in its more liberal context, it promotes a political agenda of social justice and diversity founded in postmodern philosophy, and music educators are rightfully concerned with evaluating the role of music education in society, and desire to find better ways to serve students in diverse contexts. The use of precise terminology is important when expressing a philosophical base for incorporating diverse musics into the classroom (Miralis, 2002).

However, we can also consider that music educators can (and do) function effectively while supporting a wide range of socio-political views, some of which are morally opposed to each other. Still, one need not embrace extreme postmodern concepts of multiculturalism or individualism in order to find and promote value in diverse musics, nor should one promote materials believed to be inferior or morally reprehensible (Jorgensen, 2003). Philosophies of political, social, and individual values are diverse, and provide considerably for perspectives on diverse musics. If music educators desire to assign value to diverse musical materials, it is important to consider the diverse perspectives of valuing musical materials that are similarly present across diverse cultures, and within a culture. This process begins by exploring the perspectives of the individual, the group, and the human universal, and how these operate together.

Chapter 4

Philosophical Perspective of Musical Value

John Dewey's *Theory of Valuation* describes value in terms of, “*content* and *object* of desires” (Burns and Brauner, 1962, p. 209). Furthermore, effort is seen to be contained within desire as we relate to the world around us. We value something because it promises the realization of something, making the idea of valuation fundamentally empirical rather than “merely personal” (p. 209). His first of three conclusions is most relevant to this discussion:

There are propositions which are not merely about valuations that have actually occurred (about, i.e., prizings, desires, and interests that have taken place in the past) but which describe and define certain things as good, fit, or proper in a definite existential relation: these propositions, moreover, are *generalizations*, since they form rules for the proper use of materials. (p. 210)

One of Dewey's primary concerns in this essay is that “the issue at stake is nothing other and nothing less than the possibility of distinctive valuation—propositions” (p. 213). He continues the argument for critical inquiry:

When this process is examined, it is seen to take place chiefly on the basis of careful observation of differences found between desired and proposed ends (end-*in-view*) and attained ends or actual consequences. Agreement between what is wanted and anticipated and what is actually obtained confirms the selection of conditions which operate as means to the desired end; discrepancies, which are experienced as frustrations and defeats, lead to an inquiry to discover

the causes of failure. (p. 214)

Dewey also insists that these valued *ends* are not independent from their *means*. Rather, as in the physical sciences, causes and effects are not final, but continual. He continues:

If this principle, with the accompanying discrediting of belief in objects that are ends but not means, is employed in dealing with distinctive human phenomena, it necessarily follows that the distinction between ends and means is temporal and relational. Every condition that has to be brought into existence in order to serve as means is, in that connection, an object of desire and an end-in-view, while the end actually reached is a means to future ends as well as a test of valuations previously made. Since the end attained is a condition of further existential occurrences, it must be appraised as a potential obstacle and potential resource.

(p. 215)

Valuation, according to Dewey, takes place when a particular need is present, and the “method by which warranted (required and effective) desires and ends-in-view are formed” (p. 218). It would seem to follow that for music education, materials can be considered as means to these ends-in-view, or the diverse benefits of a material when it is utilized in diverse ways. Humans simply value things differently, having no perceived shared absolute value or standard perspective of need. Hence, the need to consider the ends-in-view as a perceived function of the material becomes important to the discussion of the means (the materials).

What is the value of music? There are as many answers to this question as there are people. Furthermore, there is a multiplicity of answers within each individual or group. Even the question itself contains a wide range of interpretations that need

clarification. What is music? What is it to value something? *When* is it to value something? These questions are so broad and deep in nature, they leave little hope for returning to the original question with sure footing. Inevitably for educators the question becomes: what *should* the value of music be, for whom, and when?

However, we can also consider more objective approaches to the same question. For instance, what has been the value of music? In what ways is music valued? Here, it becomes necessary to pursue the nature of value itself, whether it represents a hierarchical structure, and the boundaries of such a structure. The contextualization of these questions is important to the postmodernist, while the content attracts the more objective. The goal of moving toward answers to these questions is important when considering the value of music education as a whole, allowing the value of diverse musics to be critiqued more freely among equally diverse individuals and groups as the framework for necessary comparison becomes agreeable as reflected in the goals embraced by music educators.

Consider first that *music* is a broad label in and of itself and contains materials that may only be connected by a single unifying factor, such as rhythm, or melody, or even sound. In essence, the actual sounds of performed musical materials can be so different as to warrant further categorization. Imagine you are sitting in a class when the teacher announces that she is going to play a recording for you. As an individual, you may assume that you will be able to categorize the material as soon as you begin to hear it. It may be familiar, or unfamiliar. It could also share similar characteristics to other familiar musical materials. The class might react similarly, depending on the cultural makeup of the group, but each individual perspective is somewhat unique.

Now consider playing the same recording to two distant cultures. Comparative reactions between the two groups are most likely different. However, it could be that all of the individuals in both groups share at least some similar perspectives. If so, these perspectives could be considered to be inherently human in that they are relatively universal due to our relatively similar physiological makeup as human beings. They could also be considered as products of cultural similarities, or even as anomalies.

The value of music has been argued from at least three human perspectives; the individual, the cultural, and the universal. Reimer (2005) explains:

The three dimensions of human reality are, paradoxically, distinct yet compound. At one and the same time, every human being, in important respects, is like all other human beings, like some other human beings, and like no other human beings. Applying those dimensions to music, we might say that every instance of music is like all other music, like some other music, and like no other music. And for music education the paradox is the same. (p. 172)

In order to better understand the implications of selecting musical materials, it is then necessary to consider each context of the human condition as they exist in modern and postmodern frameworks.

Individual Value

Considering the individual's valuations of music is problematic in that individuals are seemingly inextricable from their culture. This is the point that Westerlund (2003) makes when she gently criticizes a portion of Reimer's approach in aesthetic education. She states:

For him [Reimer], learning music is a matter of cognizing inwardly aesthetic

qualities that the musical object embodies so that the social, practical, ethical, or other so-called non-musical concerns become non-present or transparent. (p. 47)

It is difficult, then, to ascertain the extent to which the individual is a separate category from the culture. She continues:

The perspectives of the social and the individual are mutually constitutive but non-reductive. Aesthetic experience, too, belongs to the public world and to the world of mind and meanings, to the processes of making sense as well as to individual spatial-temporal existence . . . For Dewey, any experience that is mindful, such as aesthetic experience, can never be only inward and private. (p. 48)

On the other hand, it would be difficult to argue that a private aesthetic experience is not unique at all. If, then, it is unique in some way, I perhaps have some justification for going forward with individual valuations of musical materials in that, although we may live in the same environment, or interact within the same culture, or even in the same family, the concept of same can not completely describe the diversity of the individual aesthetic experience. We can only have similar experiences, although as Westerlund (2003) points out, this experience is a result of being necessarily shared.

For the individual, the aesthetic response to music is essentially a “belief about a belief as it were,” where “aesthetic attitudes can not be falsified,” even though our belief “about that aesthetic attitude” is subject to scrutiny (Fiske, 1996, p. 150). What we have then, are musical concepts dependent on interaction with music itself. Each mind individually perceives aesthetic musical states described by language. Fiske (1996) continues:

Appearance-value is the listener's very own interpretation of an aesthetic attitude state. It is where the listener finds a tonal-rhythmic interpattern comparison to look like, resemble, feel like, seem like, be like, parallel, approach, approximate, correspond to, or smack of some specific feeling, emotion, affect, desire, passion, sentiment previously experienced or known *to that particular listener*" (p. 152)

So while it is possible for individuals to derive very similar emotions from musical materials, it "is neither guaranteed by the musical social-cultural contract nor inappropriate when it is not shared" (p. 151).

If we wanted to answer the question of what musical materials to use in the classroom, we could begin by considering what individuals value about music, as much of the literature does. Eventually, however, it becomes necessary to delve into what individuals could potentially value in music. How could which musical materials benefit students that do not currently have the ability or will to access them? If we don't like to assume that something is potentially and universally valuable to all individuals, we can at least consider then that the credibility of the subjective valuations of the individual are unlikely as well. Not everyone values the same things in music, but there is no reason to assume that everyone couldn't potentially acquire diverse valuations of musical materials if they were willing and able to do so. Just because a student doesn't value a musical material doesn't mean they cannot, will not, or should not value it in the future.

Adorno (2002) refers to "the illusion of value" created within an individual associated with the "gratification of ownership" of a particular song (p. 456). In this example, the musical material becomes secondary to a larger, socially constructed valuation system. My point here is not to argue that this individual illegitimately values

his music, but rather that the valuation is incomplete or otherwise subject to influence. For example, if individual recognition of a musical material provides joy, and music has a primary role to play in the joy of recognition, then musical materials could be selected for the classroom based on their familiarity. This is demonstrated in band and choral music programs through common performances of arrangements of popular music.

Adorno (2002) also addresses the listener who is “taken in by the musical expression of frustration rather than by that of happiness,” describing the emotional listener as someone who consumes Tchaikovsky or Dvorak to confess their unhappiness, thus reconciled “to their social dependence” (p. 462). Again, the point is merely to illustrate yet another reason individuals choose to consume music. However, the problem still exists as to what other values are available to the individual from music, and whether or not the musical material is a primary or secondary source of that value in light of previously described social constructs.

Kivy (1990) describes the uniqueness of individual interaction with music, writing, “I have come to my view empirically, with myself as the laboratory” (p. 71). This approach has significant implications for the selection of musical materials. If we only treat students as members of groups, we may inappropriately create expectations for students to respond to musical materials in the same way. Fiske (1996) states, “Why that should be important to anyone eludes me completely” (p. 153). Instead, music educators can concentrate on whether or not individual students are given enough information to access valuable cognitive and emotional states available through experiencing diverse musical materials, independent from, but not exclusive of their socially prescribed meanings.

In essence, the individual retains the right to pursue personal belief systems based on interaction with materials themselves. Whether or not these belief systems sync with cultural socio-political expectations is ultimately left up to the individual. Each individual can choose what materials to engage with, and for what reasons they wish to engage. Educators can essentially help students develop tools that give them broader access to the diverse values of musical materials, making the students better equipped to mark their own musical path in the future. Since we have such wide access to materials, educators would have to determine what materials are critical for inclusion in the limited time given in the classroom, for whom they are critical, and to what ends they are essential.

A goal of encouraging the continued exploration of the individual is to find common ground, or to find the *some* in universal frameworks among diverse cultures.

Beck (1993) states:

It is an exaggeration, however, to maintain that because the self is limited, conditioned, and contingent in this way it has no significance, identity, or capacities. Individuals may be no more important than cultures, but neither are they less so. Individuals are just as unified and characterizable as communities, and they have considerable (though not unlimited) capacity for self-knowledge, self-expression, and self-regulation. There is no basis for emphasizing the culture or community to the neglect of individuals. (p. 5)

If it is the case that the group is no more important than the individual, one implication is that all individuals could theoretically benefit similarly from (or suffer through) all musics, leading to the appropriate question of whether music materials should be selected to reflect the group diversity present in a particular classroom (individuals representing

groups, cultures, etc.), or to reflect the diverse individual values of music for the student universal. The difference is whether the purpose of music education is to advocate for particular groups by social activism toward social justice, or whether music education is to advocate for particular individual human values as reflected by diverse applications of music within and among groups, essentially orienting the value of musical materials around cumulative considerations over political representations of non-dominant groups.

For example, one could argue that a particular Chinese folksong is valuable to music education because it represents the culture. Another could argue that the folksong is valuable because it contains a unique human aesthetic quality that is not readily accessible in other materials. Still another may conclude that the song is critical for inclusion in order to provide justice for a diverse student population that includes Chinese students. It is interesting to consider that all of these approaches could lead to the selection of similar materials and similar learning outcomes, even when the criteria for selection are different.

Cultural

One would think that social arguments would augment the individual argument since society is constructed of the individual as the lowest common denominator. But this is not always the case, and social arguments seem to downplay the perspective of the individual when considering aesthetic value. Elliott (2007) illustrates this friction best:

I dare say that thousands of musician-educators, community musicians, listeners, and students conceive, experience, and embrace music for its *social values*. To these people, music and musical values are not matters of some inherent meaning that resides somehow in patterns of sound, or of perceiving and reacting to

aesthetic qualities. (p. 85)

While it has proven difficult to argue universally inherent meaning in sound or patterns of sound (see Cooke, 1959), notice how music's universally perceived aesthetic qualities become the target of frustration with current aesthetic philosophy in light of social values. He continues by citing Bowman (2005) who states:

We owe to modernist aesthetic theory the idea that there exists a "music itself" which manifests itself most authentically in "works"; our legitimate object of disciplinary concern. Musics tainted by extra- or non-musical or processual meanings are less valuable or worthy of our attention. Only, as this act of sorting works by a kind of sleight of hand [or ear] that renders invisible the supposedly extra-musical implications of "our" music, or more specifically, by situating their value in structural/formal attributes deemed musically pure. "The rest" is, for legitimately musical purposes, dispensable. (pp. 3-4)

Notice again how colorfully the social benefits are pitted against modernist aesthetic theory. It becomes clear that the argument is deeply rooted in more fundamental concepts of knowledge as described in Chapter 3. From this perspective, Elliott (2007) continues to argue against considering music education for social justice as a "strictly secondary concern" (p. 86).

But the most important concern is the rationale Elliott (2007) provides, which interestingly pairs the membership of career musicians in the Nazi party with the failure of aesthetics to educate feeling. "In short," Elliott summarizes, "the central value claim of aesthetic education defies reality," leaving aesthetic education perilously at odds with the role of music education for social justice (p. 87). He then suggests that we "harness and

encourage students' dispositions for musical-social activism" (p. 87). Herein lies the problem, because there is a rather large assumption that everyone's individual disposition would be similar to Elliott's. After all, there is a myriad of social activists whose views of social justice fall into direct conflict. For example, Turner (2009) provides some insight from within feminism:

Feminist social theorists engaged in extensive and sometimes acrimonious, not to say vituperative, discussions with one another focused on the question of who truly represented the viewpoint of women or how to represent the standpoint of particular oppressed groups of women . . . and theories were used uncritically except for the central issue of their utility for the cause.

Here, it seems supporting a particular feminist cause in music education could prove to be problematic. For instance, if a high school choir felt the need to promote a women's right to choose in a song, or refer directly to this intent in a program in relation to a song, the views of some students and audience members would be necessarily compromised.

By embracing so readily the trends in concepts of social justice paired with the social nature of music, the moral assumptions of relativism and cultural diversity in the previous social arguments are carefully bypassed momentarily to present the argument. For example, a woman's right to choose the birth right of a child is perceived to be universally moral by some, but this position necessitates opposition to those who promote the universal moral position advocating the rights of the unborn. Again, whether or not social justice is a goal of music education becomes irrelevant, because the foundation for such a proposition cannot sustain itself. First, social theory should provide a foundation

for which group's version of justice is correct, and which group's is not. For the time being, most scholars seem content to tread on the Eurocentric perspective of knowledge without fear, while failing to equally question the morals, belief systems, or behaviors of the underrepresented groups because they are oppressed or victimized. From a purely postmodern perspective, this implies their behavior is justified as a cultural knowledge. Oppression and victimization of the group seems to provide a form of absolution if not innocence. The only other reasonable explanation would be a form of elitism, cloaking itself in the seemingly moral purity of multiculturalism. That seems extreme, but if there is no infallible position for advocating one's version of human rights over another, then these seemingly moral positions being advocated for in music education are highly problematic.

But again, the goal is not to question whether this theory is correct or not, but to show how slippery this path may prove to be for music education. By socially reconstructing philosophical arguments for music education, arguments for social activism in music education are embraced more as an ideological plight than as philosophical or theoretical bases, as Elliott (2007) does by his emphatic moral rejection of aesthetics, creating an interestingly moral superiority of the social argument over any other. Indeed, when an argument is presented as being in the interest of human rights and social justice, one who attempts to criticize on the merits of the argument is exposed to being characterized negatively, not in terms of the argument, but *because of the* argument.

When social activism underlies theory and research, it changes the nature of the discussion, and the feasibility of generating sound footing for educational practice.

Turner (2009) describes the lack of common goals between the theorist and the researcher when he writes:

. . . the primary intellectual impetus to sociological research now comes from the organic relation between sociologists and social movements, which use theoretical ideas, but are driven primarily by particular notions of oppression and injury that are rooted in personal experience and related to policies and programs.

An interesting illustration of the questionable nature of the more extreme social arguments across disciplines was demonstrated by physicist Alan Sokal, who in 1996 published an article in *Social Text* titled, “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity.” Intended as an experiment, Sokal purposely created a paper riddled with nonsense in order to see if a social journal would actually publish it. Consider the following satirical excerpt:

Finally, postmodern science provides powerful refutation of the authoritarianism and elitism inherent in traditional science, as well as an empirical basis for a democratic approach to scientific work. For, as Bohr noted, “a complete elucidation of one and the same object may require diverse points of view which defy a unique description” – this is quite simply a fact about the world, much as the self-proclaimed empiricists of modernist science might prefer to deny it.

(Sokal, 1996, p. 22)

The paper was published and created a lively debate for years to come, but again, Sokal would have us notice the lack of rigor and the political ideology that often pairs scholars with social agenda rather than social theory.

Still others argue how socio-political structures have impacted music education.

Adorno (2002) criticized the modern music market place when compared to pre-capitalistic music of the 19th century. He stated:

The role of music in the social process is exclusively that of a commodity; its value is that determined by the market. Music no longer serves direct needs nor benefits from direct application, but rather adjusts to the pressures of the exchange of abstract units. Its value—wherever such value still exists at all—is determined by use: it subordinates itself to the process of exchange. (p. 391).

From this perspective, Adorno (2002) contended that capitalism had destroyed “the balance between individual production and understanding by society” (p. 391). He continued:

It is now necessary to face the hard fact that the social alienation of music—that assembly of phenomena for which an overhasty and unenlightened musical reformism employs derogatory terms such as individualism, charlatanism, and technical esotericism—is itself a matter of social fact and socially produced. For this reason, the situation cannot be corrected within music, but only within society: through the change of society. (p. 392)

This excerpt from an essay entitled, “On the Social Situation of Music” written in 1932 provides direct connections between social agenda and music value, and again refers to an elusive moral imperative for what music and society *should* be (in this case, a modernist position as commonly seen in post World War I literature), and the correction of musical consumption and practice through ideological social reform.

Sociological literature related to the arts in general also outlines a cultural rift between what is called *high art* and, essentially, everything else. This social discrepancy

in valuing art is primarily a function of education, but also is attributed to social status. Pierre Bordieu (1984) heavily criticizes these segregated ways of valuing the arts, and makes light of these hierarchical levels of aesthetic taste. He concludes the article by stating:

The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile—in a word, natural enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, [and] distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences. (p. 7)

This rationale, similar to that of Adorno, proposes again that the social prism (the word ‘lens’ would imply some measure of clarity) does not account for why perceptions of refinement and the sublime are dismissed because of elitist associations, rather than considering these as other, equally legitimate ways of experiencing art, open to anyone, from any culture. In other words, ‘my culture is better than your culture’ is critiqued by—‘my culture being better than your culture’.

Some research suggests that patrons of high art are more omnivorous than their counterparts. It is these lovers of art music who may be more apt to embrace diverse musical experiences (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Similarly, Bryson (1997) suggested that univorous musical preferences based on group identity (race, religion, etc.) are more likely among less educated Americans. If music education is to provide a social appreciation and representation of all groups, the rationale for group classification and

moral assumptions need to find greater commonality among diverse ideologies.

Universal Value

The concept of universals is rather slippery from the postmodern perspective. For example, consider the comment by Beck (1993): “Knowledge is neither eternal nor universal. Once again, however, we should not exaggerate this point, as postmodernists have done” (p. 4). Curiously, we have accepted one hard construct of socially constructed knowledge while remaining reticent to part with previous constructs, such as reason, which is inconveniently necessary to argue its own demise. Instead, we have adopted terminology in lieu of universalism that suits our trepidation. Beck (1993) cites Dewey’s “enduring interests” and Charles Taylor’s “tentative frameworks,” resulting in the concept of “degree of continuity” and the qualified quantification of commonality. One is reminded of the line in the motion picture *The Princess Bride*, “He’s only mostly dead” (Reiner, 1987).

On the other hand, one is hard pressed to argue the existence of universal knowledge or reality, in which case, I even struggle with the terms *knowledge* and *reality* being used here, and rather think the terms *perspective* or *constructs* are more appropriate. After all, if we universally do not know something to be real, it is not universal. Likewise, if I as an individual know something to be real, it can only be real to me, and therefore I only think it and not know it, because I know (universally?) that knowledge is socially constructed.

But knowledge is not *entirely* constructed cognitively. It is also a biological construct (we all seemingly have two eyes and a nose), and more importantly for music, an experiential construct. “Knowledge is a product of an *interaction* between our ideas

about the world and our experience of the world” (Beck, 1993, p. 3). Beck (1993) continues:

As E.T. Gendlin says, “the assumption is overstated, that concepts and social forms entirely determine ... experience [W]hat the forms work–*in*, talks back.” Of course, all experience is influenced by our concepts: we “see” things—even physical things—through cultural lenses. But this influence is not all-controlling; again and again reality surprises us (as modern science has shown) in ways that compel us to modify our ideas. We thought the world was flat, for example, but were obliged eventually to change our minds. (pp. 3–4)

But when we consider groups are made up of individuals, and that there is a finite sum of groups, we realize that there is a penultimate group, or universal group, comprised of the individual, not the society, as the lowest common denominator. And, if we can accept the concept of human as being universal, even though we all are different, then perhaps we can accept other concepts as being universal, such as general musical meaning, even though that meaning is somewhat different for everyone. What is often left out of the equation is the value of similarity. There is no problem grouping apples, even though no two are exactly alike. I struggle at the reluctance of the literature to consider universal constructs as plausible, even if they are not comprehensive due to limited perspective. Therefore, we can at least consider that as long as music is universally constructed among individuals and groups, there remain potential universals in the unique characteristics of music that make it desirable among all.

Summary

Individual, cultural, and universal perspectives can be useful as a variable toward

determining solutions when the value is not known, yet assumed to be a value, as in past philosophical inquiry (i.e., Kant) of the existence and nature (plausibility) of universal morals. If universals are considered to be general, partial, or as perspectives, not without flaw, but also with curious similarity and having data available for scrutiny, we can avoid the extreme positions simply because they may not be true. I could, for example, argue to some extent violent behavior as normative, and kindness as an outlier, preferring the normalized behavior as culturally relevant, and become dismissive of the universal data regarding kindness. And, at some point, it could be important to consider what theoretically should take place over what is the statistical norm, assuming moral constructs as generally universal, although specifically different, especially in cultural applications. It is difficult to defend the plausibility of universals within a postmodern framework. Music is not really a universal language. Instead, music is a universal human phenomenon that, at best, shares a few common characteristics with language. It is also difficult to sustain various cultural arguments in light of the individual. This means that when selecting musical materials for use in the classroom, the choices teachers make are not without criticism, regardless of what they choose. Perhaps then we should instead consider partials, individual perspectives, or incomplete frameworks rather than dismissing the whole for a flawed part. This is in part the message of Reimer, Jorgensen, and others, and each has a somewhat unique offering to the case for the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom.

Chapter 5

Some Comparisons of Current Strategies

Various music educators have tackled the issues related to the value of music, yet none is accepted as authoritative. Still, there are some common threads that run throughout the literature that should be considered when developing a philosophical position for the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom. Materials are inextricable from their associated meanings in the lives of people, but these meanings are diverse and difficult to grasp.

Bennett Reimer, David Elliot, and Estelle Jorgensen, have made significant strides to help music educators develop strategies to better serve their students. In this chapter, I look briefly at the perspectives of each, and their consequent relation to the selection of musical materials in the classroom within the context of the previous chapters.

Bennett Reimer

A Philosophy of Music Education by Bennett Reimer (2005) has been one of the most widely read and criticized books in the last four decades in the field of music education. Since the first edition was published in 1970, the text has been revised two times: once in 1989, and again in 2003. With each revision, Reimer has continued to shape his philosophy of music education based on “the nature and value of music” (2005, p. ix). The text that follows is a consideration of the author’s concept of synergism as understood from the text and related materials.

One of the more unique characteristics of this book is the attempted application of

synergism to opposing viewpoints among scholars in order to provide a more workable and sustainable approach to music education. “Synergism,” Reimer states, “indicates the possibility of cooperative rather than oppositional thinking and acting,” which results in a greater effect on the field of music education than the current “either-or” beliefs by themselves (2005, p. 30). Synergism is achieved primarily by avoiding extremes among various positions, allowing diverse theories to explore and promote common ground.

To illustrate the concept of synergism, Reimer uses the modernist/postmodernist debate, citing an increasing trend toward resisting hard line stances in these philosophies (e.g., Haack, 1998; Parsons & Blocker, 1993). These examples highlight the critical importance of balance when considering these two philosophical stances, emphasizing the possibility of common connections between them. However, Reimer also notes that a synergistic approach is difficult in that it goes against the nature of philosophical inquiry toward the singular and the extreme. Instead, synergism requires:

. . . the hard, slogging attempt to discriminate carefully among differences and similarities of ideas, to avoid portraying alternative views in simplistic, unshaded ways in order to score points in an assumed argument, to attempt to be as subtle as required for the complexities in question but also as precise as possible so that the proposals can be grasped with clarity and directness. (2005, p. 33)

However, sometimes the synergistic approach has the potential for misrepresenting connections between philosophies where none exist.

Reimer suggests that synergism differs from other ideological foundations of pluralistic thinking. It differs from eclecticism in that it suggests a sympathetic relationship between philosophical differences. It differs from pluralism in that it seeks to

find commonalities where none are apparent, and it may even differ from the dialectical approach (e.g., Jorgensen, 1997) in that synergism seeks purposeful reconciliation while acknowledging significant differences (Reimer continues to argue for comprehensive education – see Reimer, 2007).

The author concludes his introductory remarks concerning synergism by recognizing the false conclusion of a “grand consensus,” that inevitably leads to an end of the debate (2005, p. 36). Instead, he suggests that the purpose of synergism is to encourage those with diverse opinions to work together rather than separately for the common good of music education.

Reimer (2005) points to emerging work in music cognition that offered to strengthen the previous printing. In addition, aesthetic inquiry presented the author with new material for consideration, as did research in “education, social theory, psychology, and various other fields” (p. ix). The defensibility of these areas increased significantly since the last printing, and offered much needed perspective to the author’s philosophy of music education.

By revising the text, Reimer was able to continue to apply the theoretical to the practical. He states:

I always relate theoretical ideas to practices of music education. That is, after all, what makes me a music educator, albeit of a somewhat peculiar stripe. It is as natural to me as breathing to view and understand emerging ideas in terms of their use in improving the field of music education. (2005, p. x)

With the inclusion of new ideas comes the inevitable modifications to his philosophy as stated in previous texts, these changes expand and affirm older ideas as well, and

highlight Reimer's own synergistic application to his philosophy.

There are several existing philosophical perspectives on music that have emerged over time, and each provides implications for music education. In Chapter 2 of the text, Bennett Reimer outlines the concepts of formalism, praxialism, social agency, music as a unique phenomenon, and utilitarianism as examples of how synergism can be applied to philosophical foundations. In each instance, he suggests that the extremes of these views are problematic, but sustainable to some degree. For example, formalism in its purest sense (internal qualities of music) (e.g., Bell, 1914; Fry, 1924; Hanslick, 1957) is incapable of acknowledging the external qualities of music. Conversely, form is a critical element of music, and the established elements of formalism are undeniable. Reimer states:

Form, I would suggest, is denied at great peril. It is overemphasized at equally great peril. Music is too complex, too inclusive, too multifaceted, to be entirely dependent on just one of its dimensions, necessary as each of its dimensions might be. Form . . . is, I would argue, a necessary component of music but not a sufficient one. (2005, p. 43)

Reimer's synergistic approach also necessitates that the formalist consider other contributors to meaningful musical experiences (e.g., political opinions, references to particular people or events, etc.) that may account for some meaning that formalism by itself cannot. Reimer makes similar arguments in relation to the other philosophical approaches (praxialism, social agency, etc.). In each instance, the hard boundaries of each philosophical stance are viewed as problematic, even though each stance is readily affirmed by the author as having legitimacy.

Once the overlapping areas are found, Reimer argues that these areas can provide music educators with a common foundation for developing the musical intelligences:

The primary mission of every other domain and role a culture chooses to include in education is the same—to develop the particular kinds of intelligences each domain and role encompasses . . . there is no “general domain” or “general role” in which some sort of “general intelligence” can be developed, because there are not “general discriminations” to be “generally interconnected.” (2005, p. 233)

By doing so, Reimer argues that educators can better “enhance the musical knowing and doings . . . of all students” (p. 241). Synergism is the model which can be applied to this end in the curriculum.

Furthermore, Reimer explains that the music curriculum must evolve to meet the needs of all students. Reimer states:

We cannot simply retain the performance-dominated teacher education programs we have devised, embodying that particular orientation of what music education comprises, and add to it everything else we now recognize must be included.

Something’s got to give. A more equitable balance must be achieved. (p. 270)

A synergistic approach to music education makes this process more possible than before.

Reimer continues:

We are called on, by the standards, to do for general music teacher education precisely what they require us to do for the school program—widen its scope to reflect a significant advance in our understanding of what constitutes the knowledge base of music as functionally manifested in its roles . . . We can ignore, or go into denial about, what they require of us, adapting them to our

present prejudices by sweeping their demands for comprehensiveness under the rug. I believe we have done this to a large extent, quite naturally under the circumstances of our previously limited vision . . . (p. 270).

A synergistic philosophy of music facilitates a concept of a general music curriculum that better provides for students these many ways of knowing and doing music, resulting in a general music curriculum that enjoys an expanded role in education (Reimer, 2005).

A synergistic approach to music education also strives to provide music educators with the tools they need to strengthen the values of music as an educational practice by celebrating the various ways of knowing and doing music. This may mean that all music programs across the United States are different, depending on the needs and interests of the community. Reimer (2005) suggests, “What we need is a music curriculum sufficiently comprehensive to encompass the diverse opportunities music offers people to share its special satisfactions” (p. 241).

One of the most important aspects of this synergistic approach necessitates inclusion: the inclusion of new technology (including new instruments), diverse cultures, social interests, and so forth. Reimer (2005) explains:

Nothing less than inclusiveness, in both our concept of what an effective curriculum is and how our programs can best carry it out, will be sufficient for accomplishing what people learning music deserve—the broadest possible opportunities to discover and fulfill their potentials to incorporate fulfilling musical experiences in their lives (p. 241).

Of course, the immediate problem inherent in such an inclusive view is that of time and resources. How can educators find time with such limited presence? Reimer argues that

reconsidering past assumptions for the music curriculum could provide an answer to this question.

Traditionally, American music education has focused around the (large) ensembles, a model that, while successful, does not address the musical needs of the majority of students in that so few students are involved in these ensembles (Williams, 2007). A more inclusive strategy might include more non-traditional ensembles that students are interested in which can just as effectively (if not more so) teach the various ways of knowing and doing music to students. Or, traditional electives in music history might be modified to focus on popular music history. Additionally, technology can be utilized to educate the musical intelligences as well, from music composition software to electronic and computer generated instruments. These types of programs may better represent student enthusiasm without compromising the goals of music education.

However, Reimer's concept of synergism is not without criticism. Bengt Olsson (2007) stated:

If synergism stresses a broad and comprehensive approach, the concept means a relativistic or pluralistic attitude of the music educator towards her/his students. The music educator must be both open-minded regarding the students present musical experiences and to promote new and unknown music. Synergism is something worth striving toward. But a synergistic position makes it problematic for an individual who may be deeply fond of a certain style or genre. (p. 8)

Olsson continued stressing the differences of the Scandinavian music institutions from schools in the United States:

Reimer's aims and objectives frame an extreme position in terms of activism and

based on policy aims like the individual's equality and freedom of speech. The key issue is how such an approach is connected to the characteristics of synergism. (p. 9)

Olsson (2007) further points out that the concept of synergism is “motivated by discussions of didactical aims,” and not for “ontological reasons” (p. 9). By mixing music and educational philosophies, Reimer's synergistic approach has created more philosophical problems that need further examination.

Bowman (2003) describes further objections to Reimer's text, including the premise that philosophy should justify music education. Additionally, his synergistic approach is not sufficiently acknowledged by critics. Bowman writes:

It is noteworthy (and, from Reimer's perspective, disappointing) that his new, “synergistic” vision does not emerge with any real salience in the reviews published here. My inclination as editor is to leave open the question of whether this neglect is warranted or not. (p. 3)

However, it is noteworthy that these criticisms are met with graciousness by Reimer, and ensuing discussions are aimed at “the advancement of both the clarity of our theorizing and the cogency of our professional practice” (p. 5). Perhaps this is the realization of Reimer's original intent in sharing his philosophy with the world.

Reimer's suggestions have significant implications for the inclusion of musical materials in the classroom, and he admirably points out the inequality suggested in the small amount of students who participate in public school music programs. The question remains as to the time and resources available to implement such an inclusive strategy. This question is considered further in Chapter 7.

Elliott

One of the most outspoken criticisms of Reimer's philosophy comes from one of his former students, David Elliott, who in 1995 published, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*. This praxial approach to music education is in part a rebuttal of the aesthetic approach outlined by Reimer. In his preface, Elliott (1995) states:

I am discontent with conventional thinking; after studying and teaching the traditional philosophy of music education as aesthetic education for many years, I have become more and more convinced of its logical and practical flaws.

Instead, Elliott contextualizes aesthetics as an inextricable construct of the Romantic period. He explains:

In summary, the assumptions underlying the aesthetic concept of music belong to a particular period of Western history and a definite ideology that saw its full flowering in the Romanticism of nineteenth-century Europe . . . The work concept of music not only provided musicians with a theoretical equivalent to the tangible and highly valued objects of painting and sculpture, it served to conceal music's social and performative aspects by diverting attention away from musical processes to musical outcomes conceived as autonomous objects. In these ways, music gained a place among the commodity-based fine arts, (pp. 24–25)

In addition, he suggests that, "aesthetic theory also provided a way to elevate the artistic and economic status of instrumental music," and instructs that theorists developed the aesthetic of this music toward transcendental ends, namely, "the Sublime, the Infinite," and the "Beautiful" (p. 25). According to Elliott, formalists also purveyed the prowess of instrumental music through its formal purity, and composers were believed to

be, “divinely inspired geniuses” (p. 25). He continues to define aesthetic perception as:

A code of listening that obliged nineteenth-century audiences to cooperate with musicians in stripping musical sounds of their social and practical links with the world for the purpose of entering the quasi-religious realm of aesthetic experience. (p. 25)

From this perspective, aesthetics are centered around non-existent art-objects, and the dominance of aesthetic theory is seen as “inculcating the ethnocentric ideology of a bygone age” through its support of a singularity of purpose, response, and motivation for (to) music (p. 33).

Aesthetic experience is also criticized for its intrinsic construct by explaining that proponents of aesthetics claim no utilitarian value for music, while at the same time arguing for the value of the knowledge of human feeling as an “extrinsic benefit” (p. 36). Additionally, Elliott claims that aesthetic perception and experience “require listeners to divest themselves of all individual, social, and practical concerns” (p. 36). He then defines the “traditional explanation of musical value” as follows:

Musical sound patterns represent the general patterns of an infinite number of indistinguishable natural and artificial processes that are already available in countless objective forms. (p. 37)

As a consequence, Elliott sees the aesthetic “doctrine of music education” is neither logical nor comprehensive (p. 38). For Elliott, there is no place for aesthetics in music education. Instead, he proposes a “new” philosophy of education as “something that people do” in a four dimensional model that includes the musician, music, musicing, and context (p. 39).

This praxial view of music education is oriented toward Elliott's perspective of musicianship at its core. Unlike Reimer's consideration for the various roles of musical understanding, Elliott's musicianship is dependent on "knowing how to make music well" (p. 68). Elliott describes a rationale for music by describing *music*, *music listening*, *values*, *works*, *context*, and *creativity*. The difference between Elliott's and Reimer's texts seems not to be so much a question of *what* we should do as music educators, but *why* we should do it. Again, there is no clear differentiation between what materials should be used in the classroom toward these ends, and what materials should be excluded. Instead, the primary focus seems to be a rationale for inclusion pitted against traditional aesthetic perceptions, making hierarchical judgments not only extremely vague, but irrelevant.

Jorgensen

In her book, "In Search of Music Education," Estelle Jorgensen describes the possibility of music education from two conflicting positions. The first position assumes that since "Western classical music represents the epitome of musical development and Western music education is the ideal or quintessential form of music education," then these musical materials are best for music education (1997, p. 2). The second position is inclusive of any and all forms of music education according to their diverse cultural valuations. She then describes the first view as "idealistic" while the second is "contextual," and more appropriate for a broad, inclusive vision for music education (p. 2).

In my opinion, there are already two problematic assumptions inherent in these arguments. The first problem assumes that once the idealistic "epitome of musical

development has been established,” that it alone is worthy of study. I am not certain that the idealistic position represented here necessitates the exclusion of the other. It would seem from this perspective that all biologists would exclude the study of simple life forms in favor of the complex, or that the sociologist would study only the most advanced cultures. In an effort to level the playing field for cultures, it is impossible to develop any criteria for measurement outside of what turns out to be simply another, idealistic perspective. The second problem is that contextualizing music education “properly” does not allow for cross cultural comparisons of like materials, essentially forcing the argument that materials divided by cultural boundaries cannot be compared objectively outside of their cultural traditions. Jorgensen qualifies this argument later by stating, “At the very least, this argument suggests the need for extreme caution in evaluating musical quality, especially across musical traditions” (p. 43). This accentuates her perspective oriented away from these types of evaluations toward multiculturalism.

Jorgensen continues to promote a “global view of music education” as an inclusive ideology of cooperation as fostered by the Gaia hypothesis; emphasizing “that all things on planet earth comprise part of an interconnected dynamic system in delicate balance, where the whole transcends the sum of its parts” (p. 3). In this spirit, Jorgensen states:

A comparative and contextual study of world musics can help students understand cultures other than their own and intuitively and imaginatively grasp the perspectives and expressions of others—what people have in common and how they differ—and foster tolerance of cultural differences with people in other societies, thereby providing a better basis for cooperation. (p. 3)

In a multicultural society, Jorgensen's perspective provides a contextual vision for inclusion and exclusion by defining *Spheres of Musical Validity*. The spheres provide "shared understandings" within a culture, subculture, or across cultures (p. 39). These spheres include social constructs of the intellect, aesthetics, and musical meaning, and have implications for social networks, music institutions, and political power. As a contrasting argument directed at Western classical music as the epitome of music, she explains these spheres through their development within the family, religion, politics, the music profession, and commerce. By understanding why these spheres exist and how they "are maintained . . . music educators can more intelligently and comprehensively plan their work" (p. 65). She continues:

All [spheres] do not have equal or universal claim on our attention or support for a host of moral, ethical, political, religious, musical, and practical reasons. Some spheres conflict with others. Some are difficult to reconcile with others.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, it is incumbent upon music educators to weigh these claims and devise strategies that meet them directly. (p. 66)

Much like Reimer, Jorgensen calls for music educators to find ways to work together, even when strong disagreements occur. For Jorgensen, this can be accomplished through a dialectic approach to music education. She describes these pairings as collectively being greater than their individual parts, and includes the following paired concepts: Musical form and context, great and little musical traditions, transmission and transformation, continuity and interaction, making and receiving, understanding and pleasure, and philosophy and practice. She concludes that no single universal philosophy or method can fit everyone, and that a broader view of music education requires

“reshaping the music education profession” (p. 92).

For Jorgensen, “exploring the many ways in which people come to know music throughout the world” is a primary goal of music education, and she suggests that music educators should learn to “make their own decisions rather than remain as technicians who follow the directives and suggestions of others” (p. 93). This perspective still provides some problems for music educators because of the inherent assumptions. First, it is deemed important to assume that all should value other ways of knowing. It is also assumed that these ways of knowing are valuable beyond the realm of curiosity, presumably by applying some type of criteria. In other words, musical materials that are considered valuable by some culture are therefore valuable to all cultures. This proposition is difficult to sustain outside of the global vision of the world prevalent throughout the Western literature that created it, and requires the perspective of an inclusive belief system to be greater than an exclusive belief system. Thus, simply labeling a musical material by its culture of origin necessitates its inclusion, and by reason, must include it regardless of any other factors because it is considered to be music, so long as it is significant to that culture.

At the same time, some of the values promoted by those who promote a globally inclusive agenda for music education are similar to those who promote (in Jorgensen’s example) traditional Western materials. These are moral in nature, and include “individual and collective efforts toward transforming music education and achieving greater humanity, civility, justice, and freedom” (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 19). In her book, *Transforming Music Education*, Jorgensen acknowledges problematic, negative products of society (which would include music) including rejecting (universally) the banal, crude,

and violent in favor of “refinement, physical restraint, personal dignity, love of wisdom, and care for others” (p. 19). Here again, the assumption is that a multicultural perspective, because of its inclusiveness, is *greater* than other perspectives. However, if we are to reject the banal, crude, and violent outside of our own culture, it is unclear how these things are to be measured, assuming that they are accepted within the culture in question. One cultural perspective is inevitably imposed upon the other where no cross-cultural criteria are allowed to exist.

In order to transform music education, Jorgensen considers music *as* in terms of what it is for: Music as aesthetic object, music as symbol, music as practical activity, music as experience, and music as agency. These categorizations of music allow more generously for cultural comparisons. For instance, one could compare music as practical activity in all cultures by looking for similarities which can provide data that support similar musical concepts and values across cultural boundaries. The music educator then has a goal for music education that is grounded in cross-cultural valuations, making the inclusion of any particular culture’s music less critical to the overriding musical objectives that are shared by so many cultures. The diverse ways of knowing from this perspective are more inclusive, and the educator’s socio-political agenda becomes less critical as criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of materials.

Additional Texts

There are numerous other texts that would be appropriate to consider here. For example, the work of Small (1996) is perhaps the most comprehensive philosophical social argument against Western imperialism as seen in its music. The value of Small’s writing, however, is made even greater by his lifelong professional experience in music

education. His intimate knowledge of and appreciation for the Western classical music establishment he critiques gives added weight to his arguments. His view of music education is described by its “devotion to the ethic of production” and the arts’ “ambiguous relation to society” (p. 206). Kivy (2002) on the other hand, argues the formalistic values of without necessarily excluding other values, citing the problems inherent in pairing absolute musics to specific meanings. He also considers Western classical music valuable, in part, because of its formal beauty. He states:

What we must *avoid* concluding is that no music can be beautiful without such features (formal) as I have discussed, or that having such features will assure its beauty. (pp. 86-87)

The relevance of these texts is too detailed for the purposes of this inquiry.

However, some of the conclusions of these writers are seen in the analysis that follows.

Summary

This Chapter provides a context for looking at the problem of musical materials as described by three of the most recognized voices in the philosophy of music education. These authors provide us with a general overview of the primary issues related to music education and how they have been or should be considered. As such, the discussion of musical materials for use in the classroom should be weighed against these benchmarks to see how they fit within diverse perspectives. This perspective provides a holistic view of diverse materials utilized in the classroom, and considers whether or not the characteristics of those materials are available relevant to diverse ends.

Chapter 6

Quality of Musical Materials

If there is to be a comprehensive approach to the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom, it is dependent on an agreement among the disciplines as to what music is, what music is for, and for whom it is. In each instance, there are diverse answers, and they are not always at odds with each other, or even comparable in some instances. There are multiple materials that may accomplish the same educational goals, and there are multiple goals that may be accomplished through the use of few materials.

There are also a variety of uses for music. As discussed earlier (e.g., Fiske, 1996), even a single material of music cannot produce the same meaning for any two individuals. These musical meanings may be similar, or quite different, depending on the individual and social perspectives from which they are viewed. Individuals and cultures do not always share similar musical materials, and appear to value their own musical materials based on whatever ends they are utilizing those materials for. So, we can compare the *ends-in-view* (see Dewey, 1962) to see if they are uniquely served by the chosen materials, or if other materials could provide more adequately toward those ends. In addition, we can consider whether (general) universal ends are being exploited by these materials.

To illustrate this point, consider the concept of growth as it applies to interaction with musical materials. Dewey (1962) mentions ends as being processes rather than actual ends. (Individuals don't stop experiencing nor do they categorize present events as happily-ever-after). Instead, we put together the *means* and *ends* toward new ends.

Dewey's (1962) desires grow, change, and develop. Thus, as individuals experience desirable materials in real time (ends), they are shaping their desires (i.e., increasingly acute discriminations) toward other materials, or repetitions of the same materials without the same meanings. As Hennoin (2001) states, "we have learnt to enjoy listening to music" (p. 4).

The question then, is what has been learned, and to what ends? Can these ends universally add up to comprehensive music education? Unfortunately, the confounding variables necessarily inserted into these questions make them almost absurd. Primarily, the will of the individuals to determine their own valuations (means and ends), whether empirically, collectively, or even abstractly or absolutely, creates the problem which is almost solved through multiculturalism, perhaps dependent only on the one stipulation that everyone should ultimately agree on that particular end. For certain, multiculturalism allows for reconsidering how musical materials are categorized and valued. Some musical materials are valued so diversely (or by such diverse perspectives) as to be unified only by their musical definition. On the other hand, materials so seemingly diverse in cultural valuations may also share strikingly similar characteristics. It is easier to begin to explore these similarities and differences more accurately by first shedding the traditional labels associated with musical materials, and then looking for similar qualities among diverse materials.

The available valuations of musical materials are more diverse than they appear in the market place. The sheer volume of music we are exposed to on a daily basis is overwhelming, and the narrow range of preferred uses of the musical materials is simply too short sighted to revolutionize music education. If only the consumer culture explains

what is important about music, there is little room for principles of musical growth and development toward some other end. It is critical however, to understand that musical valuation can be static, and that such an end cannot be rejected as illegitimate. By the same token, such a narrow approach to music consumption and value is not without consequence. Not everyone wants to grow the same way musically. Some like what they like, and reach a point where they are not willing to go any further. Those who repeatedly order the same item from the menu at a restaurant can empathize, but from an educational perspective, this cannot be the end goal for everyone, or else education would become impotent.

Humans can grow musically in a variety of ways, because humans value music in a variety of ways. Many music educators lean heavily if not exclusively on the social context of musical materials in order to find value. However, as Lucy Green suggests:

I have made it appear that music can ‘really’ have no value in itself at all, but that its value is always derived from its social contexts. Whilst I do believe that this must be so, I am not content to follow this through in such a way as to suggest that all music is equally valuable or equally valueless. On the contrary, I believe that both the ways in which the musical materials—the notes and their ‘inherent’ interrelations – are put together and executed, and the social contexts of ‘delineations’ lying behind musical evaluations, do form important, relevant and genuine claims for musical value . . . What the concept of musical ideology cannot and should not do, is allow us to slip into a position of total relativism from which we are unable to even attempt to distinguish ‘good’ from ‘bad’ music. (2003,

p. 22)

A comprehensive approach to achieving musical goals in education then depends on the ability of the materials and the perceptions thereof to find and promote common value for all concerned. This process necessitates critical examination of musical materials from a variety of value perspectives; an elusive and polarizing task that depends on unbiased perceptions, something that Green (2003) suggests is impossible. However, the quality and meaningfulness of musical materials is common among cultures, and is a good place to begin moving toward assigning musical materials for use in the classroom, regardless of the diverse criteria for such determinations. Composers, performers, and listeners all play a role in determining the quality and meaning of a musical experience.

In the following discussion, the broader concept of refinement is considered as it applies to musical materials. Since musicians typically practice music in order to achieve greater quality of performance (typically understood as musicality, pitch accuracy, technique, etc.), the question of why one musical idea is rejected over another arises. Additionally, similar musical meanings may be realized from diverse materials, and diverse musical meanings may be derived from a single musical material. By considering cross-cultural quality and meaning in music education, it becomes possible to consider materials for their similar musical characteristics and how they relate to common valuations among humans around the world.

Quality of Materials

One of the most appropriate ambitions for any music education program that can be helpful when considering the valuation of musical materials for use in the classroom is the concept of quality. This concept can be readily applied to most if not all musical

materials (again, assuming also the material as performance). One way music educators can serve their students, regardless of their own socio-political ambitions, is to promote quality in musical materials, enabling students to make “increasingly acute discriminations” related to listening and performing diverse music (Reimer, 2007, p. 9). Quality, or refinement in practice, allows the teacher to provide for students hierarchical ways of knowing and doing. These do not necessitate pitting one style or culture over another. Whatever the material that is being used, then the goal is to get more out of that material, or to use it more effectively. This allows for multiple materials being selected for diverse outcomes unified by their musical elements. To illustrate, one who would like to teach Western concepts of melodic phrasing at a private, Christian institution, and also at a public school, can do this with different materials while accomplishing the same musical agenda toward different ideological ends. Furthermore, since the concept of a melodic phrase is not inherently Western, it can be accomplished through diverse cultural musical materials as well. Hence, music educators can focus on the quality of the musical phrase while using otherwise diverse seemingly unrelated materials, making the selection of the material dependent on how well its melodic phrases are constructed.

But this is a simplistic example. How does one determine quality in musical materials given the diverse valuations of the elements of those materials? Even if everyone could agree that the refinement through knowledge and practice of a musical material is a goal, the question of valuing what is being refined remains. Is it worth refining in the first place? To whom is it worth refining?

Rather than comparing materials (and their parts, both social and fundamentally musical) to one another, perhaps it is best to start with a simpler comparison within one

musical material. For instance, one could compare two different recordings of the same song by the same artist. Finding all of the differences between the two would be a challenge. Comparing the quality of those differences would be another challenge. Yet these tasks are accomplished daily by recording engineers around the world. What differences are they listening for? What makes them choose one take over another? If we consider that both takes may be good, and yet still one may be better, we have allowed ourselves to make a judgment about quality based on a set criteria, both social and sonic. How do we categorize the criteria for these “increasingly acute discriminations” between what for most would be unnoticeable? And what might these criteria be?

Considering what has been described previously, we understand that any two individuals or cultures may select different criteria for determining quality. So the question relates more to the palate available for making quality decisions related to musical materials. Each musical culture, style, and genre has some unique criteria for determining quality. Within each culture, further individual preferences still contain “increasingly acute discriminations.” Perhaps this allows us to construct a model for determining quality in a specific musical material where the importance in quality in first finding the objective differences between the two takes. These differences could be described across cultural boundaries as well, since preference, ideology, and socio-political are not in play. At this stage, education becomes important because it can help the listener/performer to develop the increasing ability to pay attention to or listen *for* specific musical elements that may be ignored by a cultural perspective. By doing so, the student is empowered to make more informed decisions about the quality of those materials, simply because he has learned to attend to them. This overtly obvious example

is more important than it seems at first glance. For those who teach ensembles, studios, and classes involving diverse musical materials, the realization that many students are not sufficiently equipped to make simple discriminations between sounds is confounding. They have often learned to listen without hearing.

Furthermore, the quality of musical materials is dependent on an awareness of and the ability to discriminate between issues of quality. I often ask my students to make musical comparisons only to realize that they are not equipped to do so. Any private lesson instructor or ensemble director would affirm that students need incremental guidance when learning to attend to issues of quality. Traditionally, this has been the focus of music education. Materials have been selected and even graded toward achieving quality. Methods are developed and utilized to maximize and increase the quality of student achievement.

But there are different perspectives on quality, even within a culture. Some of these differences can be non-combative, such as two artistic interpretations of a particular symphony, or a creative re-mix of a still popular rock and roll song. Other differences can be seen as polarizing. For example, in the literature, Western classical music is often referred to as “serious” music just as I have done here, with the word *serious* in quotations, either affirming the inappropriateness of the term, or providing a derogatory perspective of the term’s elitist associations. One begins to wonder whether or not any musical materials should be considered to be serious at all. It is the comparison that initiates the consternation, however. Serious music is used to by some in order to establish its diverse functions from popular or other musics. Hence, we have now become critical of music materials based on their perceived cultural functions, and all further

discussion on the matter creates problems. And to further complicate the issue, comparing musical objects at all is seen to be controversial. Small (1998) explains his perspective:

That misunderstanding (music as object) has, as we shall see, had in turn its effect on the performance itself—on the experience, that is, of the performance, for both performers and listeners—an effect that I believe to have been more to impoverish than to enrich it. For performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform. (p. 8)

Small's (1996) argument rooted in music as something people do:

Artistic activity, properly understood, can provide not only a way out of this impasse in musical appreciation, in itself an unimportant matter, but also an approach to the restructuring of education and perhaps of our society . . . art is a model for what work could be were it freely and lovingly undertaken rather than, as it is for most today, forced, monotonous, and boring. (p. 5)

Once musical materials are removed completely from their identity as sound objects, the rules of discourse have changed. Instead of arguing what music is for, I must argue what *musiking* is for – namely it's social significance. But just before making his comparison to the music act and work, Small (1998) makes the same consideration I have made above when he discusses his amateur rendition of Haydn's Piano Sonata in E-flat for a few hundred in his community as it compares to a famous virtuoso playing the same concerto in a concert hall:

Since we are both playing from the same material, making more or less the same

sounds in the same relationships, there must also be a residue of meanings that are common to both performances. Maybe if we knew completely where the differences and the similarities lay, we should understand completely the nature of musical performance. In any case the first step is taken when we ask the question *What's really going on here?* (p. 17)

Here, the assumption that the sounds of the material are more or less the same creates a bit of a problem when considering quality. One is the quality of the sound object (assuming for a moment that there still may be such a thing), and the second is the quality of the act. Other qualities come later, including the quality of the society, which seems to be the concern of most. But as for the sound object and its ability to embody something, we can consider a few ideas regarding sound that are not generally perceived to be musical. We derive meaning from sounds that we as humans do not create, but these meanings are still socially constructed (birdsong, thunder, etc.) (see Cooke, 1959). However, the human response to some sounds cannot be entirely explained by social construct. For instance, sound that is too loud has been used recently to drive away pirates off the coast of Africa (Axe, 2008). This negative physiological response to sound is not accounted for by construct, even though we do construct the sound in part. Music cognition deals with physiological responses that have implications for musical quality and value for humans (see Dowling & Harwood, 1986). Measurements of physiological responses are often taken in order to determine what qualities are linked to what values, and make both individual and cultural judgments based on that information. In this way, we can treat music as a sound object subject to evaluation, even though we understand that the evaluation is incomplete, and to some, socially irrelevant.

If I can use loudness, then, as criteria for determining how humans value quality, I have to consider the range of these criteria, and my rationale for making those judgments. It is easy enough when the loudness is imperceptible or brings me to my knees in pain, but becomes immersed in subjectivity once perceived in relative comfort, as most of the sounds in our natural environments are. Retail stores have studied loudness levels of background music in order to promote sales successfully. This should be some indicator that even passive listeners make quality judgments about sonic musical elements, even if those judgments are not conscious.

Other issues of quality are determined by formal musical elements. For Western music, these are understood to be melody, harmony, rhythm, form, and texture, or some variation of these elements. Each diverse culture values these differently, as do those within the same culture. But if music education is to be comprehensive, the conversation about musical materials needs to begin here. Then, we can move toward how one culture values a particular musical element, or does not, and the role of refinement in that culture. This allows us to discuss the poor quality of a particular material for use in the classroom as it compares to like-constructed materials, or its intended valuations.

Once the foundation for the discussion of quality has been established, it is important to separate musical values from the polarizing confines of political perspectives promoting social agendas above individual ones. While it is certain that both can be accomplished together, it is also certain that musical materials selected in these socio-political frameworks contains the very bias it hopes to eschew when developing criteria for the valuation of music, and relegates the study of music into another, and seemingly more important field. Even if this is the case, little room is given for the

individual to operate independently from the group with which they are associated if they aspire to do so. It would be all too easy in this scenario to continue labeling people based on who they are rather than who they can become given a clean slate for their potential and their ability to breach cultural divisions and stereotypes. This would allow for music to be critiqued more freely within and among groups. Even better, the value of musical materials could be constructed without disenfranchising groups or making needless differential comparisons between them.

With a focus on uniquely musical values, solutions to problems associated with some musical materials appear. The question, “what is music for?” allows the discussion of musical value to revisit music not only as a social construct but as a human phenomenon unique to each individual, even when similarities are present within cultures. Rather than focusing on the social differences between cultures as expressed in diverse musics, a focus on the similarities between musical materials among diverse groups might produce more insight into the human condition. To do so is to move away from a focus on groups of people defined by their geography, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and so on, and toward viewing students as individuals whose musical interests are vast and malleable, lacking only the opportunity for new and “new to you” musical experiences to stretch beyond or across cultural expectations if individual value is available there.

Meaning

If music is not an object, and individual agreements between individuals within cultures are responsible for musical meaning (Fiske, 2006), it is worth considering the variance in cultural descriptions of musical materials as an open door to meanings created

similarly among cultures given global exposure to other musics while still allowing for musical perception to function among cultures in non-comparative ways. If students are continuously exposed to more diverse materials, the meanings derived from these materials must surely become less distinctive. If one gathers all the world's cattle into a single field, there is soon but one kind of cattle. Authenticity becomes more difficult to define or appreciate, which may be an inadvertently unavoidable outcome.

Perhaps the most important focus in music education should be to equip students to develop their own criteria for valuing musical materials. This is not possible unless students are allowed to experience music beyond their own culture, and educators are free to open the entire bag of tools (assuming the old ones may still work) available that would allow students to explore the possibility universally similar and distinctively musical concepts, contexts, and categorizations across diverse cultures and time. It is also not possible unless students are allowed to explore music as it reflects and influences their own humanity and individual perspectives on themselves and the world around them. This includes helping students to become aware of the relevance of music from the past, and puts current trends into a more complete perspective. This perspective would also allow students to not only place value judgments on musical materials, but to refine those judgments with time, and even change their perspective of music. The key is for the student to be given adequate and competent exposure to available materials and music experts of diverse descriptions who can navigate the acute discriminations available in each. Adequate exposure necessitates consideration for all of the fundamentally perceived qualities valued within diverse musical materials. Competent exposure requires the teacher to help the student attend to and exercise these quality discriminations.

The meaning derived from musical materials is constantly changing. One young person experiencing Beethoven's fifth symphony for the first time may be annoyed, while another in the same classroom may be enthralled. It is not much of a stretch to imagine that both students are not hearing the same thing, even though they are listening to the same piece of music. Any number of factors may influence these responses, as the literature demonstrates. However, an interesting sort of meaningful experience emerges among many who study music intently over a life time. Consider the following statement from Small (1987):

For music is, first and foremost, performance, which is a collaboration between performers and whoever is listening, and maybe dancing; those human relationships which the performance brings into existence are inescapable, and if we ignore them in our quest for ever more ingenious and elaborate objects, then they will become distorted and sterile, just as they do in the wider society of which the performance is a model. (p. 366)

Here, Small describes the ideal nature of music as it exists for him, and many others, within the authentic music making of the amateur as a rebuttal of the Western notion of the sound-object. Now if we have Small listen to Beethoven's fifth symphony along with these two younger students we would undoubtedly see a new set of variables to consider as we construct the meaning of the musical materials. It becomes apparent that the meanings associated with musical materials are constantly changing over a lifetime, and influenced by not only the attentiveness and experience of the listener, but the will as well. Perhaps this is why it is possible for some who have studied music as intently as Small to arrive at different conclusions about what music is, and what music is for. Since

the sound object does not exist for Small, the quality of musical materials is determined through performance and human relationships. However, the point here is to note that it is impossible for Small and the two young students to experience the same meaning from Beethoven's fifth symphony if all variables associated with musical quality are considered equally. They all are listening for different things.

So it becomes the challenge for the music educator to teach the student not what to listen for, but what is available to listen for, and how to attend to it. This is difficult for those who view music primarily as a vehicle for social justice or as a true model of authentic community because it is necessary to promote music toward those ends. For Small (1987), this means that current practices in Western classical tradition are necessarily understood in the context of "the present destructive and dehumanizing society of the industrialized state" (p. 367).

If these ends and others are to be valued, it should ultimately be up to the student which of these values to embrace, and the teacher to make these and other values accessible in order for the student to choose an informed meaningful path through musical materials. For some musical disciplines, this becomes difficult in that music making and listening require highly-developed skill, making them inaccessible without individualized or specialized instruction. As such, general music instruction may not be capable of allowing students to adequately explore specialized musical meanings and experiences. Conversely, limited exposure to diverse musical materials does not give students a proper foundation for making value judgments and broad contextualized meanings.

Summary

It is important to consider why humans individually and globally value music along with why cultures value music in order to better understand what the value of music is. Kivy (2002) states:

It is historical musicology and ethno-musicology that have made us keenly aware of what has always been so: that music is a deep and abiding force in the human family, no matter when or where that family has flourished.

(p. 11)

If the process of defining musical values is oriented toward some framework for the acute analysis and valuation of materials based on the autonomy of the individual perception within and among the realities that govern social interactions between and among groups over time, a more comprehensive set of criteria can be applied to the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom, making the musical label less appropriate than considering the question posed by Jorgensen (2003) and many of others, “what is music for?” Music is for many things, and all people do not share all of these things, as individuals or groups. But in order to build a foundation to support a framework for the selection of musical materials, the previously mentioned problems need to be addressed in greater detail.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

So far, I have postulated that choosing materials for use in the classroom is highly problematic in diverse classrooms. Since diverse musical, cultural, and socio-political criteria are available for comparison, it is difficult to arrive at a quantifiable sum toward universal or comprehensive objectives for music education.

Given the context of diverse students, teachers, and the various perspectives mentioned so far, what criteria should be used to select musical materials for use in the classroom? To what extent should these perspectives of diverse criteria be agreed upon? Considering the multiplicity of possible valuations toward meaningful ends and/or means and diverse valuation perspectives, the question is dependent on a common desire among music educators to develop solutions toward some central goal for music education. This goal is seen by some as critical to the survival of music education. Music Education organizations abound, citing studies toward the value of music education based on a wide variety of criteria.

The following paragraphs synthesize some of the arguments in previous chapters toward solutions for the selection of musical materials for use in the classroom. These solutions are broad considerations toward truly empowering students with the information they need to make informed musical decisions in the future. Ultimately, the student will choose *this* or *that* music toward some end of his or her choice. The goal of the music educator is to provide access to increasingly meaningful experiences with musical materials as they understood to be perceived within and among cultures. To

begin, the valuation of musical materials is considered as it exists presently in education in the United States.

Valuation of Musical Materials in the United States

In the United States, music programs in schools are somewhat unique among the other disciplines in that it is simply unclear whether music education is truly an integral part of the curriculum. In 2000, Congress drafted House Resolution 266 expressing their commitment to music education, stating that:

(1) music education enhances intellectual development and enriches the academic environment for children of all ages; and (2) music educators greatly contribute to the artistic, intellectual, and social development of American children, and play a key role in helping children to succeed in school (American Music Conference, 2007).

This valuation of music education is based on research promoting music education citing enhanced music student performance in other subjects, and music instruction is considered to be part “of a well-rounded academic program” (American Music Conference, 2007). The other cited benefits include enabling “children with disabilities to participate more fully in school and community activities,” motivating “at-risk students to stay in school,” helping students (via correlation data) achieve higher SAT scores, and keeping students (via correlation data) off drugs (American Music Conference, 2007). Additionally, music education “enhances early brain development and improves cognitive and communicative skills, self-discipline, and creativity” (American Music Conference, 2007).

Additionally, the Music Educators National Conference put together the following

standards of desired processes and outcomes (means and ends) toward a concept of comprehensive music education in the United States in 1994:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performance.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture. (Reimer, 2005, p. 250)

Here, the only indication given for the selection of musical materials is that they should be varied. The question of *why* they should be varied is addressed somewhat in standards 8 and 9, but there are no references to the quality of musical materials as there were in previous conventions. Standard 7 calls for the possibility of evaluating musical materials, but the criteria for such evaluation are not implied.

Reimer (2005) addresses the general question of whether such quality judgments are comparable among the musics of diverse cultures. The question of quality within a culture is equally problematic:

I suggest that there are indeed universal criteria applicable to diverse music but that these criteria must be applied distinctively in each . . . At the universal level,

the same criteria applied to their work by musicians all over the world are the criteria that can be applied to evaluating the results of their work. (p. 266)

In order to accomplish this, Reimer (2005) first suggests that although *craft* is limited to a particular musical style, genre, and culture, the concept of craft is understood to be more or less universal. Second, he adds that the affective response of the musical material can be comparative, again, according to its own cultural design. The third criterion is the quality of “imaginative exploration,” and the fourth considers authenticity; considering that the music was created or performed “honestly and respectfully” (p. 266-267). Reimer (2005) continues:

We must help our students understand that judging music is not a matter just of deciding what one likes but also of developing criteria that are a respectful of the complexities of music as music deserves. We must also be more helpful than to settle for the pluralist cliché that every different kind of music has its own criteria. Every different music is also music, I would argue, and therefore exists at universal, contextual, and individual levels . . . Identifying some practicable dimensions at the universal level, recognizing that they are played out differently in different contexts, and that individual instances of music can be reasonably judged in light of those two dimensions, allows us to teach what is actually learnable and manageable, and as well, I suggest, philosophically defensible. (p. 267)

Reimer (2005) has opened the door here to the possibility of cross-cultural judgments of musical materials in the midst of pluralistic cultural values and belief systems. From the psychological perspective of musical meaning, Elizabeth Tolbert (2001) has suggested

the value of cross-cultural considerations as well:

If the social, embodied conditions of representation are to be taken seriously, then cross-cultural research on “communicative musicality” (Trevarthen, 1991), or “disclosure meaning” (Watts & Ash, 1998), or “musical personality” (Sloboda, 1998) might shed further light on the processes by which musical meaning is intersubjectively constructed in specific contexts. Cross-cultural work on how music represents animacy, or a systematic interrogation of the metaphors in music discourse that reference intention and movement, could help elucidate ideas about how social essence is tied to musical structures . . . And finally, an evolutionary approach that understands music in the broadest sense as referring to and enacting the creation of cultural truths . . . (p. 92)

If music is constructed to represent or enact cultural truths, it is worth evaluating how well these goals are accomplished within cultures. If we consider the history of Western musical development, we can observe and trace the development of musical thought over time, giving another context for comparison of materials that is similar to the cultural one. But this is not to pretend that one is universally better than the other. Instead, we realize that one is different than another, and need only to consider how this is so, not just culturally, but collectively in the universal sense. Many might object to such a consideration because it implies hierarchical relationships between musical materials, and thus cultures. But this conclusion is not necessary. If we say that one material is more complex than another, then we must also say in what ways such is the case. Then we decide whether or not complexity has value, and for whom it can be valuable. If we say that one musical material is better than another, we need to explain in what way, and

consider whether or not this way has potential for universal valuation. Any concept of better has to be measured somehow. If two boats race on the water, we measure which boat is better by which one is faster, even though the slower boat may have a smoother ride, or more comfortable seating. Again, we measure according to what the material is *for*.

In the case of music education, we measure musical materials according to not only what they are for, but what we think they should be for. Teachers of music are not dispassionate about the selection of musical materials, and a large part of what they desire is to facilitate the passing of these value systems to their students. They wish for students to enjoy the feelings they have enjoyed, and hope to help them navigate through the sonic world in search of meaningful but elusive organizations of sound in time. Teachers of music have become experts in discriminating between sounds and organizations of sound, and have developed meaningful relationships with musical materials based on why they value them. The differences in the vision for music education in the United States between music educators has little to do with what music *is*, and everything to do with what music is *for*. Music education, then, becomes what it is today – an agent for something non-musical. Thus we discuss music (as object or action) education in terms of meaning, form, culture, or some other perspective or agenda.

Valuations as Conflicting Ideologies

Much effort in research is devoted to establishing and validating differences. For example, biologists isolate living organisms into hierarchical categorizations. These categorizations include physical realities that are observable, and more readily palatable as truth or reality (i.e., lions eat zebras). Additionally, there are generally few moral

assumptions to cloud our observations (i.e., lions should or should not eat zebras). One runs into more difficulty when considering human observations (humans are sexually active) because of the diverse moral implications contained within biological information (adult humans should not be sexually active with children, even if they desire to do so), and individuals arrive at different conclusions as to what is just or equitable and what isn't. Social scientist construct measurements of behavioral norms that help us decide what should or should not be moral, but such norms are not disconnected from diverse principled belief systems. For instance, we don't say, "since it is the case most communities agree that we should not commit murder, we have decided that it is universally wrong to commit murder." Instead, morals are perceived by many as having diverse origins (mythology, religion, philosophy, etc.) that can then be applied to social situations. In these cases we say, "since it is the case that it is wrong to murder, our resultant collective will is to help prevent and prosecute those who commit murder." When individuals collectively and appropriately perceive of diverse actions and their consequences for others, we make determinations toward values based on perceptions of equality and justice, which are ideologically constructed more so than observationally determined. As described in the previous chapters, these valuations can be individual, collective, or even generally universal perceptions.

Music education research is filled with these moral implications, as seen in a recent article by Louis Bergonzi (2009) appearing in *Music Educators Journal* entitled, *Sexual Orientation and Music Education: Continuing a Tradition*. As a professor of conducting and instrumental music education, Bergonzi's concern is that we should "acknowledge the ways we reinforce heterosexuality and the heterosexual lifestyle, and

to examine how homophobia and heterocentricism bias our curricular content and the lives and work of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender) music teachers” (p. 25). Bergonzi’s (2009) solution is to balance the moral scale of equality between heterosexual and LGBT individuals in part through better understanding and teaching musical materials and their associations with the sexual lifestyles of composers and performers associated with them. For example, Bergonzi (2009) suggests that this can be done by contextualizing musical materials in terms of the composer’s inspiration (e.g., including Wagner’s sexual relationships with men as equally or similarly inspirational to his work as his sexual relationships with women).

There is little question that Bergonzi’s (2009) intent is positive, and that his thoughts are supported adequately by research in various disciplines. He is obviously desirous, as most are, to meet the needs of students and to prevent any harm that might result from the materials and perspectives being introduced. The goal of consideration for all is a positive one, and Bergonzi (2009) perceives reinforcing the GBLT community in music education “as an expansion on these foundational values.” Still, these expanded values are not shared by all, and therefore the argument is problematic. If, however, we propose to incorporate the relevant LGBT community information in the classroom, yet without promoting or seeking to legitimize the LGBT community appropriately as purposed in the article, we have not accomplished Bergonzi’s (2009) objectives.

There are other problems in music education that make the problem even more colorful. The Supreme Court has stated that schools may teach all about religion, but without sponsoring religion (Phillips, 2004). This may not be terribly difficult in most disciplines, but it becomes more difficult in music education, especially in relation to

choral music. For many, the very purpose of sung text is not for knowledge of, but reaffirmation of specific belief systems. In the public school classroom, sacred music is allowed so long as it does not advocate for religious belief (Phillips, 2004). In this instance, we have a problem similar to the previous one regarding sexual preference. However, while differences in sexual preference are advocated for, diverse religious perspectives are protected through a purposive lack of advocacy. In essence, students may sing religious texts so long as they don't really mean it, whether religion is a part of their belief system or not. The idea is to neither promote nor inhibit religious views (Phillips, 2004). If religious views are to be tolerated, and homosexuality is to be advocated for, it is not clear how one arrives at the criteria for making such judgments when some students in the classroom may be offended by both propositions equally.

It seems more appropriate, then, to advocate for and promote the characteristics of musical materials in the classroom that find similarly meaningful ends and means among diverse cultures irrespective of their specific applications to ideology. Rather than advocating for a specific perspective of a musical material, one can sum all of the perspectives observed and look for what diverse groups similarly value. It is also appropriate to consider the selection of musical materials for students in regions that are not as culturally diverse, or are culturally unified by a particular belief system. Additionally, musical materials may be selected out of a particular philosophical framework, making available to students a particular discipline of music that may be unavailable anywhere else or accessible only with great difficulty, creating marketable advantage. Turner (1989) describes this type of advantage within the context of decision:

In competitive situations, comparative advantage—that is, the advantage I have

over you (resulting from my different resources, skills, information, and so on) in performing particular tasks or pursuing a particular strategy—becomes a major element in determining my choices because what is promising for me, as compared with you, will differ. (p. 181)

Within music education, the value of some programs resides in their uniqueness, and what some would describe as inaccessibility due to social inequality. Some address this problem through making musical experiences such as the symphonic orchestra more accessible to minorities or the lower strata of socio-economic classes. Others instead reject that premise, citing the irrelevance of such outdated and imperialistic perceptions of music. And then there are those who seek common ground between these perceptions.

These idealistic positions are far less problematic when proposed as considerations rather than hard and fast realities. This point is brought out again and again in Reimer's (2005) synergistic model. Instead of instructing students on how to perceive music, students can be instructed in the variety of ways music is perceived in social and cultural contexts. Again, it is notable here that quality considerations provide a significant alternative to ideological agenda in diverse classrooms. By addressing quality over ideology, the students are occupied with Reimer's "increasingly acute discriminations" of the materials in question (p. 9). Here, students can consider how well a particular musical material does what it is supposed to do.

When considering musical materials for performance, the solution does not work as well. There is a significant difference between listening to or describing a song and singing it when the text promotes an ideological point of view not shared by the student. If the point of view is not a moral dilemma for the student, there is less of a problem.

However, considering the previous moral perspective on murder, many students would object to singing a song promoting or condoning such abhorrent behavior. But such scenarios happen all the time, especially in opera or musical theatre. For example, the musical *Sweeney Todd* contains numerous lyric passages that advocate murder. However, in the context of a drama, or even a concert, such materials are performed willingly by students, and enjoyed by audiences.

Many perform religious content by contextualizing the materials in a similar fashion. It is understood that performers do not always mean what they say outside of the context of singing it. This is important because it provides a solution for diverse populations to perform musical materials that lie outside of their own belief systems, but are allowed in contexts of suspended belief. Performances that capture the majestic nature of a bygone era, or perhaps the plight of the horrifically oppressed are good examples of how students can engage meaningfully with musical materials they would not promote outside of their intended context.

Still other materials are valued primarily because the materials are contextualized as being authentic and meaningful in real, everyday life. Christopher Small advocates such musical experiences of African Americans in *Music of the Common Tongue* (1987), where the music is an honest representation of the beliefs and social realities of the individual or culture. Materials like these, properly contextualized, depend on sincere belief in the message presented in the lyrics. Both performer and audience commune with one another through shared ideology.

But musical materials may be perceived from both perspectives simultaneously by diverse students. A traditional Christmas concert offered by many schools across the

United States provides a good example. In the current environment, such concerts have become highly problematic in some regions. Understandably, students who are not Christians might object to performing in these concerts. Other students who are not Christians may contextualize the performance as being disconnected to real life, and have no trouble performing at all. And, still others may find value and meaning in the reality of the lyrics as they perceive them in real, everyday life.

Music educators, then, can find solutions by understanding the nature of their students and the belief systems that exist within a community. Additionally, music educators should consider their own belief systems, and how applicable they are in the community. It may be that in one community, the educator would need to find acceptable alternatives for a few students who may choose not to participate in certain concerts. In another, the same concert should be scrapped entirely for something that is more inclusive. The real problems occur when solutions are presented as overriding, one-size-fits-all propositions to applied equally everywhere. Such broad policies lead are too restrictive for all concerned, and are disingenuous toward communities generally support musical activities not desired in other communities, whether ideologically or otherwise. Rather, multiple solutions are available.

Decision

Perhaps one way to address the problems inherent in the selection of musical materials is to look at the nature of problem solving. There is quite a difference between choosing a song for a local concert and choosing a set of valuations for a music curriculum across the United States. This difference is seen in how we approach a decision “oriented to purposes” and leading to “actions that achieve ends” (Turner, 1989,

p. 178). For music educators, the structure of the problems being addressed in this paper includes not only the cognitive science of music, but the conflicting social views previously outlined.

Herbert Simon (1977) provides two categorizations of problems in terms of how they are structured. Well structured problems occur within definable parameters and solutions are found within specified areas. Ill-structured problems include the complexities of time, multiple definitions or perspectives, and may have multiple solutions. Turner (1989) used these concepts to illustrate problems in scientific belief, stating:

It would be convenient if the contrast between scientific belief and decision could be reduced to this contrast—if *decision* always meant ill-structured problems, and *science* had only well-structured problems. Alas, this is not so. (p. 178)

He continues by illustrating decisions that scientists make based on assumptions, belief, and specific knowledge toward a variety of possible solutions:

But a particular kind of resolution, one that makes the facts everywhere the same, or reduces phenomena to a single general frame of reference, is a conscious goal in science, although it is always pursued with the recognition that it may be that the fact can be further reduced, that our information is incomplete, and that our best founded beliefs about the basics may prove wrong. (p. 180)

But solutions (beliefs) are not the same as decisions:

In contrast, decisions are forced choices, where not to decide is usually to decide—that is, to produce consequences that might have been avoided . . . they require a frame or definition of the situation that is more or less fixed, usually by

taken-for granted factual beliefs, by assumptions about the costs of improving these beliefs, by the personal limitations of the decision makers, and by the limitations on their powers and other practical limitations. (p. 180)

Using this contrast between belief and decision helps illuminate the differences between well-structured and ill-structured problems. He continues:

. . . ill-structured decision problems, most notably those involving alternative descriptions of the situation-some of which are congenial to certain strongly held beliefs or interests of particular groups of persons relevant to the decision, or reflect familiarity or experiences with different aspects of parts of the problem-proceed differently from decisions on well-structured problems, where the range of “solutions” is fixed and the grounds for choosing the “best” solutions are uncontroversial. (p. 180)

For the purpose of this inquiry, considerations for the selection of musical materials are a problem somewhat like one of Turner’s (1989) political or scientific problem. As previously seen, music educators often disagree and have strong beliefs and advocacy interests which are added as a part of the solution. If a music educator’s belief system about music and musical meaning isn’t enough, one can also include socio-political interests, culture, and even taste or preference. Then, adding in the initial intention of bringing these considerations to a classroom full of culturally diverse students, the decision becomes highly complex, and the solutions are multiple, and consequential.

For Reimer (2005) the solution to the highly complex problem of music education is found in his model of synergism. Jorgensen (1997) chooses a model that considers *this*

with *that*. Both examples can be observed from the decision perspective in the preceding paragraphs, and provide solutions that are malleable rather than rigid, allowing for time and circumstance to weigh in on the problem as diverse hypothesis flare up in the literature, some leaving their mark notably on the decision, such as multiculturalism. Still, the solutions given by various music educators also have their differences, and prefer not to embrace such fluid solutions. At the same time, each position assumes to have the more contextual perspective. Western classical music, for instance, finds itself in a relatively stable position in higher education in the United States. Most colleges and universities have traditional ensembles, and colleges of music within these institutions primarily study music through traditional Western instruments and ensembles.

While change is occurring, it is a slow process. In the mean time, scholars continue to chisel away at this idealistic monster created by the Western society. Others continue to build it up through musicology, Western theory and composition, and the continued in-depth study of Western music history. For these individuals, Western music is contextualized through its development, its artistic value, and its preservation and continued progression. For others, such a perspective is considered to be improper.

Jorgensen (1997) states:

At least two contrasting stances might be adopted in seeking to understand music education. First, assuming that Western classical music represents the epitome of musical development and Western music education is the ideal or quintessential form of music education, only Western music and music education are worthy of study. Other forms of musical education, especially those in preliterate or preindustrial societies, cannot safely be relied upon to provide a sound basis for

musical instruction. Second, our study broadens to include all forms of music education, irrespective of their societal derivation. When world musics are assumed to be understood contextually and comparatively according to many different value systems, Western classical music is seen as only one of many diverse musics rather than the ideal, each music is properly studied within the context of its own tradition in ways consistent with that particular musical tradition, and Western musical education is only one of many ways by which people come to know music. (p. 2)

Notice how quickly the idealistic label is attached to Western classical music (and in a way rightly so, as many of its proponents promote its legitimacy with unsustainable arguments), and the word *proper* is attached to world musics. The assumptions here are problematic, firstly in that proponents of Western classical music have equal claim to proper contextualization, and a variety of ways to support such claims. The second is that the proper perspective is not idealistic, but dispassionate. Jorgensen (1997) explains her point of view:

The latter view offers a contextual rather than an idealistic view of music making and music education, a basis for a broad and dispassionate view of music education, one that seeks to be faithful to all the classical, folk, and popular musical traditions of the world (in comparison to the more limited and culturally biased conception of music education implied in the former view). (p. 2)

If a view of Western music is limited, it should be stated in what ways these limitations exist, and toward what ends.

This is why the social perspectives of the previous chapters are so important to

understanding why music educators are making diverse arguments. For Jorgensen (1997), one end is cooperation and tolerance. She states:

A comparative and contextual study of world music can help students understand cultures other than their own and intuitively and imaginatively grasp the perspectives and expressions of others—what people have in common and how they differ—and foster tolerance of cultural differences with people in other societies, thereby providing a better basis for cooperation. (p. 3)

Music education becomes a tool for fostering idealistic ends. My argument here is not that such a position is wrong, but that this position does not depend on the legitimacy of the other. The argument presents itself by unnecessarily and indemonstrably confining the value of Western classical music. It could be the case that the study of Western classical musics can provide a sound basis for music education alone, without consideration for folk and popular musics if the ends are valued by the culture(s) in question. It could also be that folk and popular musics alone could provide a sound basis for music education. The end argument is essentially that all cultures should study all musics in order to achieve some ideological end. Whether or not all cultures agree on that particular end seems to be irrelevant, not only to the Western classical idealists, but the progressive idealists as well. There are so many considerations, the problem is ill-structured, and the solutions are essentially compromises, and do not consider the status-quo in music education as the best solution.

One method of problem solving that emerges from such complex considerations is *satisficing*. Satisficing seeks for a solution that may not always be the best one, but rather the solution that is at hand for the moment. Simply stated, the solution agreed upon

is *a* solution rather than *the* solution. The macro-decisions music educators make are well situated within this concept, whereas teachers in the classroom have significantly fewer interests to contend with, and are able to make decisions quickly. Additionally, individual teachers generally have more practical musical goals for their students, reflecting the realization that we all were, at some point, students who were motivated to teach in part through the materials we valued. It is interesting to consider why our experiences with these materials, regardless of their origins, were so deeply valued by each of us that we chose to pursue music further.

Solutions

The problem for music education is a large one, and infinitely complex. Yet, every day, teachers select materials for use in the classroom with little consternation. Atheists sing religious texts, women play music written predominately by men, young children play the music of Bach, older educators expand their perspective to include popular cultural music, and young students use technology to create musical materials. In the midst of the arguments, music education continues to be highly important to many different people for what must be as many different reasons. The arguments about the meaning of music and its value for humans are inextricable from the ideologies and belief systems we bring to the table. According to the National Center for Education Statistics there are 50 million children enrolled in public schools. About 9 million (this number is steadily increasing) children are enrolled in private schools, charter schools, or are homeschooled (IES, 2009). This means that approximately 18% of primary and secondary children in the United States are pursuing their education with a preference for specialization of some kind, whether religious, technological, scientific, musical, or

toward some advantage in the marketplace or toward higher education. More importantly, these institutions need teachers and in some cases parents who desire to create their own curriculum, or desire to emphasize materials that promote their specific belief systems. There is a need for students to obtain the skills they will need in the marketplace that are exercisable within diverse belief systems, and consequently a need for teachers who specialize in these areas, especially those areas that require excessive time and dedication to a singular musical task, such as the mastery of some instruments or vocal techniques requiring years of intense study with highly-skilled instructors.

Music educators can enhance their selection of musical materials by considering all of the factors that should be considered in making such decisions. Primarily, the music educator should have a firm grasp of how music is valued by diverse cultures while developing a deeper understanding of their own valuations of music. And I think it is important for teachers to work out these musical material decisions within their own areas of specialization, especially in current practices in Western classical music, where teachers' unique skill sets are paramount for student empowerment. Although some may view such training as a waste if not fully realized in adulthood, either through professionalism or lifelong participation, I am not certain that this is the case. It may be that the process of becoming a specialized musician enriches the life of the individual so much so that the process of becoming can be perceived as the end rather than the means.

When selecting musical materials, musical quality is important. Materials that are selected for ideological or social purposes should be considered musically valuable among like materials. Also, quality should be considered as having some cross-cultural criteria. It is not necessary to assume that world musics are completely incomparable. On

the contrary, when considering music as a human phenomenon, it seems likely that music around the globe should be and is quite similar from a number of perspectives.

Also, musical considerations should supersede all others, including teachers' world-views. Social justice cannot provide the backbone of music education, and educators need to be considerate of their students' diverse perspectives. Musical materials that promote ideologies can be confrontational and counter-productive to the inclusiveness they strive to support. There is enough to do teaching the music itself.

Perhaps music education can focus on giving students a foundation for branching into diverse skill sets. If we seek equality among diverse students by providing equal access to musical materials of quality, regardless of their origins, then we are not doing a disservice. True empowerment is giving all students equal access to information, skill acquisition, and our own judgments about how these can be best utilized toward whatever ends they may desire. A firmer grasp of the philosophical consternation regarding musical materials in the classroom may help individual music educators realize the inadequacy of their own arguments, and help them develop stronger arguments in the future. At the same time, music educators depend on deeply held convictions about musical materials as the root of their passion for music education. These not need be dismissed, even when conflicts arise. While diverse perspectives may in fact provide breadth, they do not always provide the intimacy that draws people to music within a culture, or even outside one's own culture. Music education is many different things to many different people. Comprehensiveness is still an elusive task, and while social equality is *an* answer, it cannot be *the* answer. Rather, music education can provide a wide variety of benefits in as many ways.

Music education as it exists today in the United States is still fairly traditional in practice, but the diversity of materials available, even for limited traditional ensembles, is quite large. It may be that one of the reasons that the Western classical tradition has maintained such a strong position in education is simply because it provides a source of musical valuation and meaning that continues to influence young students. It is not necessary to avoid such materials in pursuit of more relevant musical experiences. On the contrary, these materials continue to provide a rich source of meaningful study for American students and students around the world. Allowing the student access to these and other materials is a good strategy for teachers. If all of the benefits of musical materials were apparent on first hearing, or on the first performance attempt, there would be no need for music education. Instead, musical materials are problems that need to be solved. They need to be listened to with acute consideration for what is being heard, and in what context. They need to be performed within the guidelines established by a particular craft, and they need to be valued by students beyond their current abilities. If the materials are chosen carefully, they can provide a renewable resource for learning and meaningful engagement.

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