

Tradition, authenticity and context: the case for a dynamic approach

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The encounter – and sometimes confrontation – of music with various cultural backgrounds challenges many preconceptions and prejudices on music making and learning. The rise of what is now often called ‘world music’ has not only brought new sound worlds to Western ears, but digs deep into existing systems of belief. In discussing both Western classical and world music, concepts such as tradition, authenticity and context are often used with firm conviction. On closer examination, however, they are applied with ambiguous or even contradictory meaning. A cross-cultural exploration of these concepts reveals that they are not nearly as clear, stable and value-free as they may appear. A more dynamic interpretation of these terms is needed to understand contemporary realities of music making and education at all levels, and to enable teachers to apply these concepts to everyday studio and classroom practices.

Tradition

While British world music educator and scholar Trevor Wiggins was conducting fieldwork in Ghana, he asked one of his informants whether a song he had just performed was traditional. The answer was an unequivocal ‘yes’. This greatly stimulated the ethnomusicologist in Wiggins, who proceeded to ask whether the musician was perhaps aware by whom or when this particular song was created. Without batting an eyelid, the musician disclosed truthfully that he had composed it himself, just a few days ago.

Tradition and the related concepts of authenticity and context have been major sources of confusion for both the discussions on and the practice of cultural diversity in music education. Most dictionaries would define ‘tradition’ as limited to oral, and defined fairly statically: ‘the act of handing down . . . from one to another, or from generation to generation . . . esp. by word of mouth or by practice without writing’ (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2005). In contrast, in his philosophical dictionary, Willemssen includes in the concept ‘everything that has been man-made and – from one generation to the next – has been passed from the past to the present, irrespective of its reception being appreciated or not. In this interpretation, tradition is an essential dynamic reality.’ He also refers to a ‘more trivial’ meaning of tradition: ‘when it refers to the stagnation of morals, customs or habits, to which people resort who do not wish to accept progress.’ He dismisses this widespread

meaning of the word as 'inauthentic' (Willemsen, 1992). This tension between static and dynamic perceptions of tradition merits further investigation.

The sociologist Hobsbawm distinguishes *custom* from *tradition*. He argues that the former 'in traditional societies has the double function of motor and fly-wheel'; it does allow innovation and change up to a point, although this is limited because 'it must appear compatible or even identical with precedent,' to give desired change the 'sanction of precedent'. About tradition, however, he states that its 'object and characteristic . . . is invariance' (Hobsbawm, 1983: 3), which links it to the 'inauthentic' meaning of Willemsen, and represents an unequivocally static interpretation of the concept.

This discussion is eminently relevant to music education, which for the past two decades has hovered between emphasis on perpetuating a body of masterpieces or creative musicianship. Cook considers the canon a major obstacle for looking at music from a wider perspective. He argues that from the time of Beethoven, the 'musical museum' came into existence, which 'provided the conceptual framework within which music took its place in the cultural heritage' (1998: 30), the repertory or canon:

The term 'classical music' came into common currency. Borrowed from the 'classical' art of Greece and Rome, which was seen as the expression of universal standards of beauty, this term implied that similar standards had now been set in music, against which the production of all other times and places must be measured. (Cook, 1998: 31)

In the sense of model and standard, this Western tradition is not dissimilar to, for example, the tradition of North Indian classical music, which is not written down, but nevertheless consists of a strict and complex set of rules governing the reproduction, restructuring and generation of melodic and rhythmic patterns. A *raga* is in fact an abstract 'Gestalt' or 'idea', which is translated into audible sound every time it is played. Consequently, notated works are of very little significance. Whilst none have succeeded in defining the exact rules for any *raga* in detail, most senior musicians will largely agree on what is acceptable in each *raga* (cf. Bor, 1999: 1–2). And although there are broadly respected recordings of particular ragas by celebrated musicians, these would never be considered the central body of works. So, while there is a clearly identifiable 'classical' tradition in North India, it is defined in different terms from Western classical music.

The tradition of Indian classical music as a set of rules governing musical practice has proven quite solid and compares well with that of Western classical music up to the end of the nineteenth century. Morgan speaks of 'an essence, dictated by a transcendent power and preserved by an equally transcendent tradition' (1992: 45). But he continues:

Within the dynamic context of Western cultural history, this preservation has had to be tempered by some latitude for change, at times quite extensive. Yet these changes have tended to be defended either as superficial adjustments, beneath which the essential principles persisted, or as necessary corrections of previous digressions that had diverted music from its true course, distorting its essential nature. (Morgan, 1992: 45)

This is still much like the Indian perspective. Up to the beginning of the 20th century, in the West it was possible to maintain this canonic 'belief in a communal musical language,

prevailing underneath a wealth of superficial, time-bound stylistic transformations' (Morgan, 1992: 46). This is quite relevant for the discussion in relation to music education, which in most countries still relies heavily on late 19th century European ideas (Volk, 1998: 31; cf. Schippers, 2004).

The deconstruction of the canon in Western music opened the way to traditions that are more performance-oriented than text-based (Morgan, 1992: 60). This included oral musical cultures, which are often defined more by performance than by pre-existing repertoire or rigid rules. Many of these have an explicit or implicit theory at their base, but the exact organisation of tones is not predetermined. In that way, each individual performance becomes the moment of truth: it is then and only then that expressions of traditional concepts or new ideas are accepted or rejected by listeners on the basis of a wide set of criteria, ranging from practical matters such as inspiring people to dance, to considerations of whether it fits in the tradition (Hobsbawm, 1983: 2), to such metaphysical factors as its effectiveness in bringing forth trance or calling up spirits of forefathers (Rouget, 1985).

This leads to the discussion of a number of approaches to tradition beyond a canon, standard or performance practice. While the predominant concept of tradition in relation to Western music has been that of the canon, tradition approached as 'music in culture' has become a favoured concept in Western thinking about musical traditions beyond Western classical music, pop and jazz, particularly since Merriam argued that 'there is little validity for treating it as though it were divorced from social and cultural considerations, for [...] music is inevitably produced by humans for other humans within a social and a cultural context' (Merriam, 1964: 29). There is much to be said for this view: music is very often an inextricable part of a larger event, whether it is a circumcision ceremony in Guinea or a wedding march in an American church. But considering context as a static phenomenon may lead to musical misunderstanding as well as dubious educational principles, as we will see in the discussion on context later in this paper.

In fact, the idea of tradition as a mechanism, the last of five approaches proposed in this paper, addresses one of the crucial concepts causing confusion, particularly with reference to cultures other than our own. While Western culture has commonly viewed tradition as a static phenomenon in the way of Hobsbawm, and of Willemsen's 'inauthentic' meaning, handed down with little change, most non-Western cultures in fact have traditions that constantly change with the demands of the times, in an organic way, or in a conscious effort to retain relevance to their audiences. The mechanism underlying this process, which may be composed of systems of transmission, peer-pressure, and a number of other factors, accounts for the occurrence of what is generally referred to as 'living traditions'. Change within certain boundaries is not only allowed, but in fact is part of the essence of these traditions.

Ironically, Hobsbawm argues, some of these changing or even new traditions may suggest an antiquity that they cannot claim historically. He speaks of 'invented traditions', defining them as 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1). The tendencies we have noted before, attributing or suggesting more ancient beginnings to musical pieces, performance styles, instruments or lineages than can be justified, belong in the same category. In Western classical music, the 19th-century dress

code musicians tend to follow when playing Bach or Mozart is a good example of this: it suggests a time-honoured performance practice, which in fact did not exist at the time of the great composers of the classical period (Drummond, 2000).

All in all, the overview above allows us to distinguish five approaches to tradition, with varying degrees of dynamism: we can view tradition as a canon or body of works; a standard with an explicit or implicit set of rules; a performance practice; music in culture; and a mechanism of handing down music. We can identify a number of indicators for predominantly static or predominantly dynamic approaches to tradition. The predominantly static approach would be characterised by a body of work that has been in existence for a considerable amount of time, with no new additions, in a closed system, where the tradition is a sign of distinction for an established class, whether social or religious, with sometimes less emphasis on artistic value than on function in society (as in much ritual music). The dynamic approach would typically show musical styles deriving their existence from a continuous process of change and innovation, with the music being constantly exposed to new influences. As any examination of different musical traditions will illustrate, virtually no musical tradition would qualify as all static or all flexible. A continuum from static tradition to tradition in 'constant flux' would serve best to represent the diversity and nuances of contemporary musical realities.

Tradition and music education

As we have discussed, one of the crucial elements in the survival of many musical traditions is their method of transmission. Especially in the case of unwritten traditions, this is where the music of the recent past is handed on and preserved. But the process involves more than the musical material itself. In both written and unwritten traditions, a complex of thoughts and approaches to music are handed down from teacher to student. In forms of music that do not have a written tradition to refer to, teachers often express a conservative approach to the music they are handing down. Almost without exception, they will praise the past and express concern about the future, criticising young musicians for a lack of knowledge or respect for the tradition. If these views were correct, all oral traditions would have been deteriorating for centuries, which is unlikely given the level of contemporary performers of Indian *ragas*, Balinese *gamelan* and South African *iskathemiya*. However, this conservatism forms an important mechanism that is in the interest of living traditions: in order to avoid rapid change with the possible consequence of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, a conservative mechanism is built into the process.

When examining music education in the classroom, it is possible to distinguish between various approaches to tradition. The most common phenomenon is presenting world music as a series of static entities. This goes back to the 19th and early 20th century conception that the Western world is modern and dynamic, and that other cultures stagnated in their development at various stages, from the 'primitive' cultures of Africa and Oceania to the (relatively) 'high cultures' of Asia and the world of Islam (Bohlman, 1988). Material and approaches emphasising the dynamics of music across the world require more diverse musical examples, complex insights and innovative methodologies, and consequently are rare.

Authenticity

Authenticity is another concept frequently discussed in the context of culturally diverse music education, particularly in research emanating from the United States. Dictionaries provide a range of relevant meanings: 'entitled to acceptance or belief, as being in accordance with fact, or as stating fact; reliable, trustworthy, of established credit'. This seems to be the prevailing sense. Another meaning is 'real, actual, genuine' (as opposed to imaginary, pretended), and a final meaning used particularly in relation to written music is 'really proceeding from its reputed source or author, of undisputed origin, genuine (opposed to counterfeit, forced, apocryphal)' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2003).

Going to the next level of depth, Mautner's *A Dictionary of Philosophy* defines authenticity as 'the quality of being genuine, being true to oneself', and traces its use from Socrates, who referred to the 'authenticity of the self', the genuineness of his thought and actions, on to Augustine, who emphasised the spiritual nature of the true self as opposed to the inauthentic demands of desire and the body, to Rousseau, who contrasted the true, authentic, natural self with the corruption imposed by society, and finally to Kierkegaard, who insisted that the authentic self was the personally chosen self, as opposed to one's public or herd identity (Mautner, 1995: 39). Consequently, in common usage, it seems to have strong positive overtones, sometimes even of correctness or moral justness. This can easily cloud critical observation, and has led Davison to wonder: 'is authenticity just a synonym for 'good'?' (2001: 264).

In music, authenticity has been equated with 'historically correct' by the early music revival movement from the 1950s or 1960s, and with 'placed in the original context' by early ethnomusicologists. However, it is difficult to maintain that any art form exists merely to be reproduced in a historically correct manner, or in original context. Others might argue that the key to authenticity lies in aesthetics or emotional affect. The discussion revolves around whether the essence lies in the notes, in the instruments used, the setting, the context, in the sound, in the attitude or frame of mind of the musician, or in some intangible approach.

If we return to the original meaning of the word, it refers in the first place to the hand that created the work of art, to the manuscript. But what should be considered an authentic performance of a work by Mozart: one where the performer follows the improvised cadenzas in a piano concerto as written by the composer (or a later one), or where he follows the tradition of improvising that particular section? In this and almost all considerations of authenticity, the reference (e.g. the written work, the performance practice) and the criteria (e.g. historical accuracy, aesthetic effect) have to be defined.

Recent decades have seen a lively discussion on authenticity in Western music, particularly in the context of pre-Romantic performance practice. At first, the focus seems to have been on trying to approach the authentic through historically accurate ensembles and period instruments, playing historically correct scores. Cook (1998), demonstrating the challenges of arriving at 'authentic' scores even for established classical composers, comments on the phenomenon of authentic performance, now also referred to with the less pretentious epithet 'historically informed':

As a slogan, 'authenticity' neatly combined two things. On the one hand, the claim was that performance on the appropriate period instruments, based on the performance

practices codified, was 'authentic' in the sense of historically correct. On the other, the term 'authenticity' brought into play all those positive connotations [...], the idea of being sincere, genuine, true to yourself. In this way, if you played Bach on the piano – if your performance wasn't authentic – then you weren't simply wrong in the scholarly sense: you were wrong in the moral sense too. (Cook, 1998: 13)

Grove Music Online provides a much more accommodating and perhaps the most satisfying description of historically informed performance, touching on most of the areas discussed before:

'Authentic' performance may refer to one or any combination of the following approaches: use of instruments from the composer's own era; use of performing techniques documented in the composer's era; performance based on the implications of the original sources for a particular work; fidelity to the composer's intentions for performance or to the type of performance a composer desired or achieved; an attempt to re-create the context of the original performance; and an attempt to re-create the musical experience of the original audience. (Butt, 2005)

In approaches to world music with a focus on tradition, authentic is often used to mean 'coming from the right country,' being 'unaffected by outside influences' and 'exactly as it is in the original social context', in addition to 'historically correct'. In the 'authentic' world music movement, this has led to a noticeable predilection for ageing musicians representing obscure, vanishing traditions. New developments were shunned, particularly those attracting large audiences in their culture of origin, and involving modern instruments and amplification. Taking this approach to its extreme, it seems that unless a musical style is on the verge of extinction, it is not authentic. This approach is difficult to maintain in the modern performance practice scene, as it completely bypasses considerations of power of expression and ability to communicate to audiences, including young learners.

At a more abstract level, world music leads us on a quest for the essence of any music. In that context, we should mention concepts such as *rasa* (India), *duende* (Andalusia), *saudade* (Brazil) and *tarab* (World of Islam), which are all used to indicate 'the real feeling' or 'essence' of specific musical styles and genres. Consequently, this is an area of crucial importance in defining authenticity from the perspective of culture bearers or opinion leaders in specific traditions.

In a study on *Global Pop*, Taylor approaches the subject as follows: 'I have already touched upon the authenticity with which most regular listeners to music are familiar: authenticity as historical accuracy (in 'art' music) or cultural/ethnographic authenticity in world musics. Increasingly, there is a confusion over these authenticities and an authenticity that refers to a person's positionality as racialised, ethnicised, and premodern' (Taylor, 1997: 21). Taylor continues by referring to Trilling and Taylor who define authenticity as: 'a sincerity or fidelity to a true self' (Taylor, 1997: 21). This definition echoes both the philosophical approaches, and appears to work well in the context of popular music. It is supported by the entry under 'authenticity' in the digital *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

The defining term in rock ideology is authenticity. Rock is distinguished from pop as the authentic expression of a performer's or composer's feelings and the authentic representation of a social situation. Rock is at once the mainstream of commercial

music and a romantic art form, a voice from the social margins. Presley's first album for RCA in 1956 was just as carefully packaged to present him as an authentic, street-credible musician (plucking an acoustic guitar on the album cover) as was Public Enemy's classic *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, issued by the CBS-backed Def Jam in 1988; Madonna was every bit as concerned with revealing her artifice as art in the 1980s as Dylan was in the '60s. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2003)

Cook makes a clear distinction between the supposed inauthenticity of the pop star as opposed to the authenticity of the rock musician:

Expressed a bit crudely (but then it *is* a bit crude), the thinking goes like this. Rock musicians perform live, create their own music, and forge their own identities; in short they control their own destinies. Pop musicians, by contrast, are the puppets of the music business, cynically or naïvely pandering to popular tastes, and performing music composed by others; they lack authenticity, and as such they come at the bottom of the hierarchy of musicianship. (Cook, 1998: 11)

Although the dichotomy that Cook creates is more likely to survive scrutiny when presented as extremes of a continuum ranging from purely commercial/inauthentic in intent to pure expression of the self/authentic, he does create a clear and useful framework for considering authenticity in popular music.

In relation to world pop, the debate gains another dimension, fed by the earlier 'world music authenticity' discussion. Taylor points out the confusion and ethnocentricity that surrounds the concept in pop music from a world perspective: while Western pop musicians are appreciated for breaking cultural barriers, non-Western pop stars are often condemned for not being 'authentic.' He introduces the term 'strategic inauthenticity', a quality that he ascribes to strong, independent world musicians such as Youssou N'Dour and Cheb Khaled, who refuse to be pigeonholed and choose to move freely between their musical heritage and new influences (Taylor, 1997: 126–36). Taylor designates the concern with being true to one's tradition (in the sense of music fixed in culture) as premodern, while he calls the more eclectic approach an expression of postmodernism (1997: 143). This provides an intelligent and realistic perspective. In this way, pop music generates a refreshing new setting for thinking on authenticity.

In this way, we have defined five ways of looking at authenticity: following ancient scores or the canon; using period instruments and ensembles; recreating the original setting or context; obedience to rules and the approach to playing defined by the tradition; or aiming at vitality of expression, meaning, the essence of a musical style. The latter way refers to a meaning of authentic that warrants some further discussion, as it is of a different order, referring to a truth to oneself. At a root level, authentic comes from the Greek root *authos*, self. Authentic music (practice or education), then, must do justice to the musician, the composer and the music itself.

Authenticity in music education

Issues of authenticity play a major role in two arenas of teaching and learning world music: the demand for 'pure tradition' in instrument-specific teaching, and the much expressed

desire for authenticity in the area of music in schools. The latter, as Johnson (2000) points out, often focuses on hierarchical, static interpretations of authenticity, rather than fluidity.

The geographical position of many contributors to the debate may have something to do with that. Change is most likely to take place close to the cultural centre of a musical tradition. Consequently, when musics of the world travel, the attitude of both the teachers and the students tends to be quite conservative. Even accomplished masters of a tradition often 'freeze it in time' when leaving, on the basis of the aesthetics at the time of their departure. Students outside of the culture also seem to be more interested in what is ancient in the culture they are learning. Developments in a tradition that have taken place after a teacher left his country are often discarded as superficial, new-fangled fads. In this way, students may develop an approach to music that is a full generation behind the country of origin. In this sense, even in 'living traditions', we find a strong tendency towards historical authenticity, going back to the last contact with the culture of origin.

In music education in the classroom, there are basically two approaches to authenticity. One is to take songs or instrumental pieces from staff notation and interpret them as if they were Western music. The reasoning behind this is limited and simple: if the transcription is well done, the notes are authentic, and consequently so is the music. In fact, this suggests aspects of 'universality' in music: once notated, we are dealing with music that can be interpreted by anyone. In practice, subtleties of any tradition may be taken away from the music, and nothing is substituted (Lübke, 1994). All aspects of the music that cannot be written down are ignored, or replaced by Western interpretations. Consequently, the music may well lose the other authenticity, power of expression. Another approach is to achieve authenticity by recreating as much context as possible. Here, the choice of relevant context is of crucial importance in order to support a viable claim for 'authentic' world music education. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

In an overview of research in music education dealing with cultural diversity, Lundquist (2002) states the obvious 'Authenticity is a complicated issue' after quoting divergent views on the matter. These include apparently straightforward views such as, 'using authentic instruments may be the most effective way of introducing music from another culture' (Pembrook), and the capability of any representative of a culture ('culture bearer') to determine what is authentic musical and cultural representation (Campbell). Lundquist proceeds to more complex and realistic views that 'two individuals from the same ethnic group may interpret the same piece of music quite differently' and 'multiple 'authenticities', equally legitimate, yet different from each other, can and do exist' (Klinger) (Lundquist, 2002: 634). The key challenge is perhaps best stated by Santos, who argues that 'while authenticity is indeed a legitimate concern in the context of preserving tradition, its very concept is founded on the idea of cultural stasis, a belief that has been refuted by modern scholarship and the very dynamic nature of living traditions' (Lundquist, 2002). The desire for a tangible authenticity simply does not correspond to the musical realities, in which various approaches to authenticity overlap and interact.

Campbell found that:

Interestingly, authenticity was deemed by some of the ethnomusicologists interviewed as having minimal importance. Yung explained: 'I almost never use 'authentic' to discuss the music of China, because it implies absolute values' that are non-existent

within so historically long and varied a nation. [...] 'Where is one to draw the cut-off line' between the authentic and pure music and the music that has been borrowed, adapted, and accepted as their own by the people of a designated culture? (Campbell, 1996: 68)

Meanwhile, there remain educators who believe that authenticity can best be defined very narrowly. Campbell reports Loza as saying 'Once you take the music out of its cultural context, it's no longer authentic' (Campbell, 1996: 69). Another interesting example of an effort to emulate this type of authenticity is the project 'Culture bearers in the Classroom', which was carried out by a number of schools in the Seattle area with the University of Washington. In this project, rather than using approaches deemed less opportune such as singing songs from transcriptions, experimenting on indigenous instruments, or merely listening to music, people who could be considered owners of the tradition were asked to work with children in primary schools (Campbell, 1998). Although this approach does resolve the limitations of some other approaches, it does not address the problem raised by Klinger above, and is vulnerable to weaknesses in communication and transmission of culture bearers who have no training or experience in working with children in schools, as I have witnessed extensively in similar projects across Europe.

In fact, an unorthodox approach may sometimes be more successful. A Canadian music teacher at the International School in Kuala Lumpur, taught *gordeng sembilan*, a Sumatran drumming tradition to a very mixed student population, using drums from six different cultures: a Chinese drum, an African *djembe*, *cumbia* drums from Columbia, Malaysian *kompang* frame drums, bongos and the tom-tom of the trap drum set. At first glance, this would appear to be a perversion of the traditional concept of 'music in culture'. However, in the light of the preceding discussion we can argue the experience became authentic in the 'true to self'-sense, because of the sound and feeling of the actual event. The class focused on musical experience for the children rather than anthropological elements, and could consequently be deemed quite successful.

In a way, the task of the educator then becomes one of making choices of strategic inauthenticity, where the relationship between the original and the new reality in each of the areas we have mentioned can be represented by two circles that may overlap either (i) completely (the educational experience is identical to the source or model); (ii) partly (certain aspects correspond to the source or model); or (iii) not at all (the new experience has a completely new identity) (Fig. 1). This can be viewed from each of the perspectives of authenticity we have discussed: following scores; instruments, ensembles, setting or context, rules and approach to playing, or vitality of expression.

In both music performance and education, authenticity is an elusive and particularly laden concept. Because of its implied sense of 'goodness', the discussion often becomes muddled. We have seen that one cluster of interpretations refers to authenticity as corresponding to original models in historical or geographical terms. We have also seen that this approach does not necessarily make clear which aspects of the music need to be correct in order to deserve the epithet 'authentic'; the suggestion is to have the right instruments or acoustic recordings rather than musical meaning. From the world of popular music, we predominantly encounter meaning of being true to oneself, irrespective of models or traditions. In world music, we encounter both. A non-static approach to all of the factors

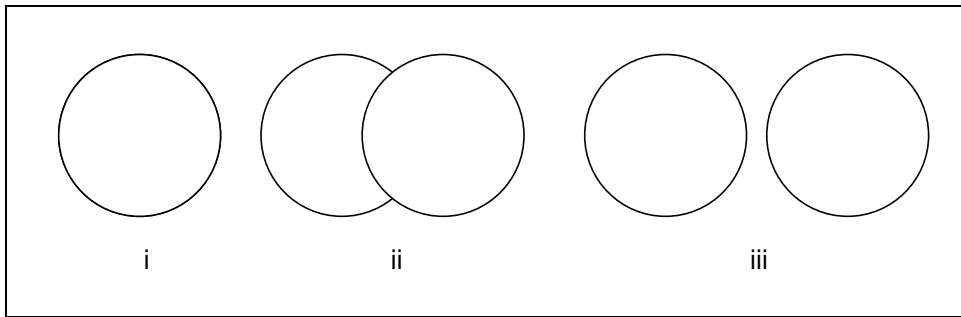


Fig. 1 Relationship between original musical event and new reality (based on Campbell, lecture at Dartington College of Arts, 1998)

discussed and their interaction is required in order to fully understand music education in culturally diverse settings, tailored to specific models and settings in education. This is becoming increasingly relevant in contemporary culturally diverse societies. With the decline of a one-on-one link between musical tastes and ethnicity of second and third generation minorities, eclectic musical mixes, and new musical realities, authenticity in the narrow sense is becoming less and less of an issue.

Considering authenticity at large, we can observe it is used in strongly varying and even opposing senses. While the early music practice aims at faithful reproduction of historical originals, some ethnomusicological approaches aim at recreating local settings. Rock musicians emphatically do not want to *copy* an original, but to *be* original. Paradoxically, the aim of each of these approaches is to create the most truthful musical experience possible. Like tradition, we can represent the various approaches to authenticity as a continuum, ranging from interpretations tending towards reproduction to emphasis on originality.

Context

Tradition and authenticity are contentious issues in cultural diversity in music education, and context is no less so. Inspired by ethnomusicologists of the past four decades, we have come to realise that music exists in and as culture. Merriam's (1964) *Anthropology of Music* played a major role in this awareness from the 1960s. Many of his views prevailed into the final decades of the 20th century and beyond. In a 1980 article, Nettl states that many anthropologists still 'favour a definition of music in and as culture', while at the other end of the continuum he detects musicologically oriented researchers whose primary concern is in the structure of the music itself (Nettl, 1980: 1). When he states the five characteristics around which ethnomusicology revolves, one of them is that 'music can be understood only in its cultural context' (Nettl, 1980: 7).

Nettl's views also resound in the ISME *Policy on Musics of the World's Cultures* (which he co-formulated): 'Music can best be comprehended in social and cultural context and as a part of its culture. Properly understanding a culture requires some understanding of

its music, and appreciating a music requires some knowledge of its associated culture and society' (ISME, 1992).

While understanding the context of any form of music may result in a deeper understanding, there are numerous examples of music reaching and touching audiences who have little or no knowledge of its original context. Consequently, dogmatic approaches to context as a *sine qua non* for valuable musical experiences must be rejected, and a more dynamic model needs to be embraced.

Recontextualisation

One of the most striking characteristics of music in the past 100 years is mobility. By necessity this creates new contexts, and consequently challenges the perception advocated by many ethnomusicologists that music is inextricably linked to its culture of origin. If ritual music from West African villages appeals to a concert audience in Paris, if Indian court music finds willing ears from Sydney to Stockholm, and 18th century Lutheran German music is appreciated in 20th century Tokyo and New York, we have to re-examine ideas concerning the need for original cultural context. It may be naive to say that music is a universal language that transcends all boundaries, but it does seem that a great deal of music travels remarkably well.

We don't have to look very far for recontextualisation. Any contemporary performance of Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* in a modern concert hall for a non-Lutheran audience is an exercise in recontextualisation *par excellence*. Recontextualisation is the norm rather than the exception. Obviously, all performances of Indian classical music in the West are recontextualised. But so are all performances of Indian music in India to a considerable extent, when a middle class audience of predominantly Hindus in expensive saris and suits go to a concert hall in Calcutta to listen to a singer who sings through a microphone on a stage, not in a music room at a Moghul court.

Recontextualisation can also be manipulated, for instance in evoking a context that suggests a desirable setting, which does not correspond to that in the culture of origin. A powerful example of this phenomenon, used as a marketing tool, is the emphasis Ravi Shankar placed on the spiritual context of Indian classical music when he brought it to the West. Shankar chose to downplay the artistic and worldly context of this music, because he sensed that young Westerners in the late 1960s were more interested in its spiritual qualities. The film *Rasa* (1970) about the work of Ravi Shankar, with images and sounds of spiritual life dominating the overall picture, vividly illustrates this creation of new context.

In this light, it is difficult to maintain that works of music can be seen as either autonomous works of art or expressions of cultures in the strictest sense. Whenever they are heard, they are heard in a new context. And even the driest of researchers trying to look at a piece of music objectively will make choices dictated by context. Focusing on establishing pitch changes in time rather than physical impact on the listener, social effect or its power to call forth spirits of the forefathers constitute far-reaching choices, which will have decisive effects on the outcome of the study or experience of music. While Western thinking on music has outgrown the misconception that Indian ragas are primitive because they do not use counterpoint and harmony, it is equally inappropriate to state that house music is unsuccessful as music because it is difficult to establish creative use of melody or

rhythmic variation: the fact that it appeals to millions of young people across the world is testimony to its success in its specific context.

As one of the first music educators to embrace the dynamic view of context that arises from this discussion, Swanwick (1988) argues that 'musical procedures can be absorbed and re-used over centuries of time, between vastly differing cultures and across miles of geographical space; they are not irrevocably buried in local life-styles, even though they may have their birth there. Musical elements – that is to say, the sensory impact of sound materials, expressive characterization and structural organisation – have a degree of cultural autonomy which enables them to be taken over and reworked into traditions far removed from their origins' (Swanwick, 1988: 107). Although this approach may lean too heavily towards a claiming that the essence of a music lies in its formal qualities, it does open the road for a less static view of context in music education.

Before looking at the process of recontextualisation in relation to music education, let us recapitulate the most important findings on context. We can distinguish a range of approaches to temporal, acoustic, ideological and social context. Insistence on trying to recreate particularly the latter as closely as possible in musical events is common, but so is increasingly acceptance of the dynamics of music moving from one time and place to another, or even an emphasis on this dynamism. Due to inevitable dynamics, truly original context is quite rare. However, an insistence on its importance can be found in various types of music and settings across the world. We can represent the various approaches we have discussed as another continuum, from original context to complete recontextualisation.

Context in music education

When considering context in music education, there are two distinct areas that warrant discussion: teaching specific traditions, and teaching world music in the classroom. The former is a subject that has hardly received any attention in the literature; the latter has been much discussed. In music education in schools, Campbell (1996: 69) reports on a 'heated debate amongst teachers', with radically opposed views between the experts she interviewed, ranging from 'What's the purpose of playing Thai music on specially tuned xylophones if students don't know where Thailand is or what it is?' (Miller) to Yung's experience in learning Western classical music in China and Hong Kong: 'No one gave me information of the cultural background or context of the music, but by listening I developed a sense of what was 'good music'.' Yung proceeded to explain that 'verbal knowledge about music is less important than the sound itself', and claimed that 'an emphasis on the cultural and social background may even block the students' opportunities to develop a closeness with the music,' echoing the views of Swanwick, and supporting my argument for a more dynamic approach.

When discussing context in relation to music education, it is important to define whether we are discussing the context of the original musical practice or the context of the transmission process. This creates four possible situations, all of which occur at some time or other. We can encounter (a) the teaching of traditional material in a traditional manner; (b) traditional material being handed down in a new context (most frequent); (c) non-traditional material being handed down in a traditional manner (quite rare); and (d) non-traditional material being handed down in a non-traditional manner. That may sound

more complicated than it is. In practical settings, the situation often directs itself by the possibilities and constraints of the new institutional or social context. Music teachers will generally adapt their styles of teaching and possibly the material they teach to the new context in which they function. Even when a student goes to India and studies with a genuine Indian guru he or she will be creating a new context for a music that has been transmitted largely within family traditions for many centuries. In virtually all contemporary settings for music teaching and learning, static concepts of context are challenged.

Whilst studying, classroom music teachers are made acutely aware of the concept of context and its importance in teaching world music. Many introductions to world music – particularly for education – begin with a long introduction on the country; lessons will very often start by indicating the origin of a particular piece of music on a world map: ‘This sound comes from this little turquoise country next to the big green one.’ Even amongst young teachers who have been taught to do otherwise, this is a persistent practice. This is something that struck me with the teaching practice of a number of the students at Amsterdam Conservatory, who had recently been to the Gambia to experience other forms of learning (personal observation, 1998). When insecure, beginning teachers seem to reach back to learning experiences from their own childhood, leading to a fossilisation of educational ideas that can last generations.

How does one recreate the appropriate context in African percussion lessons when working on rhythms linked to circumcision? It may not be long before teachers run out of boys if they take faithful representation of the original context too seriously. Or at a much more innocent level: does it really help students understand Javanese gamelan to know that Indonesia consists of 14 000 islands? In the case of Indonesia, it might help to understand the many differences between Balinese and Javanese gamelan have developed on two separate islands, with different religions and customs. The relevance of that type of context can be argued. Similarly, it may help when the Caribbean is depicted as an area linked to both Europe and Africa. That type of information can add a layer of understanding in approaching many of the musical styles. But not all context is relevant.

On the basis of the discussion above, we can distinguish between five principal approaches to recontextualisation:

- (1) trying to recreate the original context
- (2) explaining the original context in detail
- (3) using aesthetic references of the learners as the entrance into any given music
- (4) using musical structure as the entrance into any given music
- (5) using the actual musical practice as the entrance into any given music.

Interestingly, the latter three correspond closely to the views advocated by Reimer (2003), Swanwick (1988), and Elliott (1995).

In the end, however, there is no stock answer to the question of what and how much context should be included in teaching world music. Decisions can only be based on intelligently weighing the various arguments for each specific situation. In music education, not only for world music, but also for Western music from various periods (Drummond, 2000: 22–4), a five-step procedure can make educators aware of the main points to consider when dealing with recontextualisation (Fig. 2).

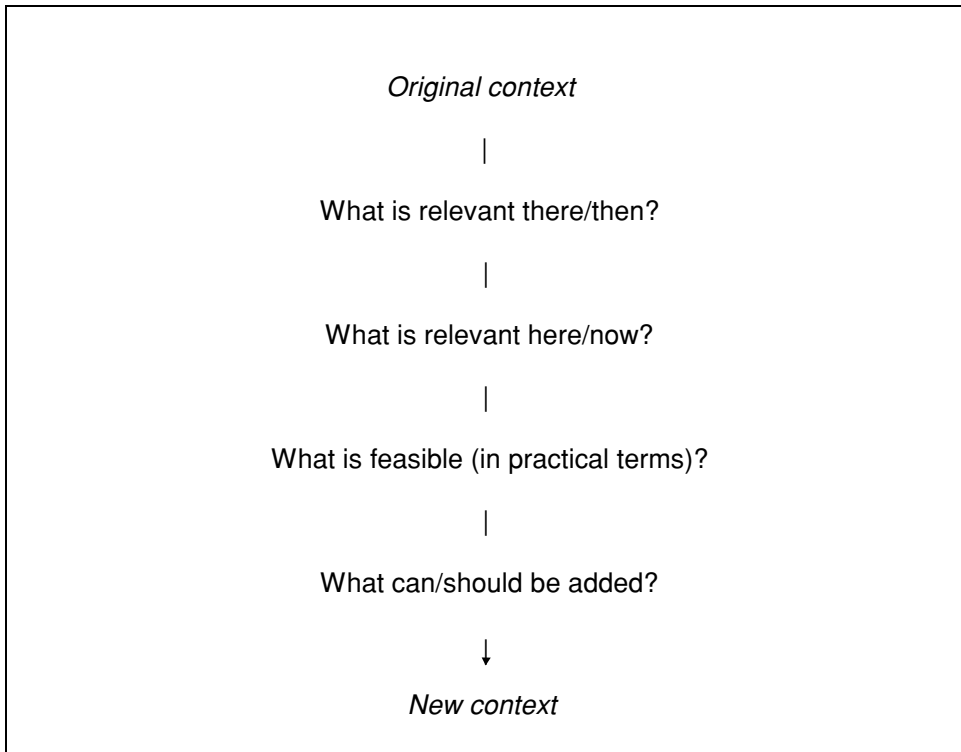


Fig. 2 Recontextualising music in education – a dynamic approach

This ‘commonsense view of context’ has not pervaded everyday practice yet. Across the music education literature of the past two decades, concerns are expressed about teaching world musics outside of their original context, and including these in music curricula. For many experienced world musicians and music teachers, however, this is merely a reminder to be aware of choices: there is always a new context.

Conclusions

We are living in an age that has embraced the idea of cultural diversity in music education. The aims from national curriculum level to lesson plans of individual teachers typically include introducing pupils to music from various cultures. But the approach to key concepts often remains unclear. In order to gauge the full scope of the ideas in this paper, let us look closely at a key paragraph in a significant publication on cultural diversity in music education, *Volk’s Music, Education, and Multiculturalism*:

Although many agree that teaching from a multicultural perspective can enable students to more clearly understand other people through their music, there is the concern that an inauthentic presentation of that music could confirm stereotypical

ideas about these people. Indeed the entire issue of authenticity comes into question when considering that the very act of transferring music out of its cultural context and into the classroom destroys its authenticity. Proponents acknowledge this problem and say the simplest ways around it are to use recordings of authentic musics and to invite community culture bearers into the classroom to present their music firsthand. (Volk, 1998: 9)

Although this paragraph seems to make excellent sense at first reading, it raises a number of questions. First, it seems to suggest that the purpose of dealing with world music is justified by the extra-musical purpose of 'understanding other people'. Next, it mentions inauthentic presentations as confirming stereotypes. Although it is easy to call to mind situations where this happens (I remember with horror a school project in 1993 where our efforts had been to focus on the sheer musical experience of African drumming class, while the teacher had added her own choice of context by presenting the children in reed skirts with broom spears, pretending to be cooking a missionary in a large pot on stage), an ill-chosen 'authentic' performance is at least as likely to confirm stereotypes.

Let us contrast Volk's remarks with the insights of Slobin on music in the 'global flow':

... world music looks like a fluid, interlocking set of styles, repertoires, and practices, that can expand or contract across wide or narrow stretches of the landscape. It no longer appears to be a catalogue of bounded entities of single, solid historical and geographical origins, and the dynamics of visibility are just as shifting as the play of the –scapes [as defined by Appadurai (1990)]. To flesh out the scope of visibility in music-cultural flow, it might just be possible to identify a few common processes. Shifts of profile are very common nowadays; some are self-generated, others just happen. A music can suddenly move beyond all its natural boundaries and take on a new existence, as if it has fallen into the fourth dimension. (Slobin, 1993: 20)

Almost all music is transmitted out of context. Our entire formal music education system is a major exercise in recontextualisation. With over 25 years of experience in world music, I could not say what exactly constitutes 'recordings of authentic musics'. If they are ethnographic recordings of 'pure' traditions, they would be quite likely to meet with little interest from children (in the West and in the countries themselves), who will find it very difficult to link a recording of strange music to their musical awareness. Community culture bearers represent a more fruitful avenue, but there the risk of low quality music (which children do tend to distinguish from good music) and awkward presentation have to be taken into account. Volk's paragraph implicitly – and defensibly – cautions about using school editions in which musical styles from other cultures are stripped of all the qualities but those that translate into Western concepts such as harmony and notation, which indeed can make for very poor musical material (Lübke, 1994). But in the end, a powerful inauthentic piece of music presented out of context may engage learners more than an academically approved, representative traditional piece, if the connection with the learners is well conceived and carefully presented.

On the basis of the discussion in this paper, it may be argued that one of the key aims of world music education is to deal intelligently with the dynamics of tradition in order to create authentic learning experiences in contemporary contexts. For the model of looking at situations of transmission, however, the choices that are made are relevant to record. Has

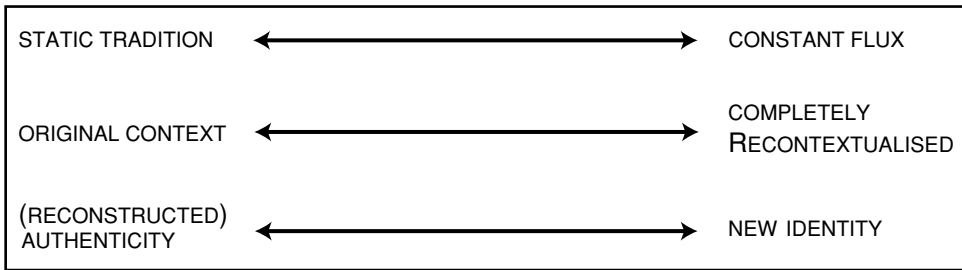


Fig. 3 Issues of context cluster

the teaching situation been shaped with a static idea in mind, or a concept of constant flux; does the situation attempt to recreate an original context for the music, or does it see the music as completely recontextualised, and does the situation reflect a tendency towards reconstructing an authentic (in the sense of culturally and/or historically correct) version of the music, or does it work from the view that the music has a new identity in the new context? This leads to a combination of the three continua we have discussed (Fig. 3).

This simple diagram can form a powerful instrument in determining approaches to these complex issues when planning strategies for teaching and learning music from various cultures. It forces the teacher (or institution) to be aware of these factors. But at the same time, it allows a facilitator to make choices and justify departures from dominant, static views of tradition, authenticity and context, in order to create a vibrant, meaningful musical experience for music learners in studio practices, community music settings, or the classroom.

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