

Travel agency of musical meanings? Discussion on music and context in Keith Swanwick's Interculturalism

Pentti Määttänen and Heidi Westerlund

heidi.westerlund@diba.fi

pentti.maatanen@helsinki.fi

Interpretation of musical works depends on meanings, which, on a pragmatist view, are necessarily tied with cultural habits and practices. This entails that a piece of music is always interpreted differently by people raised in different cultural contexts. A musical work is always a result of this process of interpretation. Strictly speaking, works of music are therefore different works in culturally different contexts even if they were presentations of the same notes. The following discussion of the conditions of cultural exchange in music illuminates some pragmatist viewpoints on the topic by using Keith Swanwick's ideas as a point of comparison. The discussion shows that a contextual starting point leads towards a more 'child-centred' education.

Introduction

In this article, we shall discuss whether music is contextual or autonomous. This still seems to be one of the key disputes when multicultural music education is examined. Keith Swanwick's approach is one, although not the only one, to this issue. Our attempt is to show that from a pragmatist viewpoint the prospects of cultural interchange are different from what one might think from his philosophical position.

Swanwick (e.g., 1988, 1994a) uses the term 'intercultural' when referring to teaching many musics or 'world musics', as often is expressed. The terminological choice over 'multiculturalism' is understandable since there is a clear tension between different viewpoints. Interculturalism is said to refer more often to an approach that emphasizes exchange and co-operation between different cultural groups, whereas multiculturalism starts from describing or gaining the inside, *emic*, perspective to a group or their cultural practices (see, e.g., Cushner, 1998: 3–4). Generally speaking, interculturalists seem to emphasize communication over cultural stability (e.g., Samovar & Porter, 2000; also Kwami, 1996). According to Nketia (1988), intercultural approach sees the differences not as barriers but as alternatives. Theoretically multiculturalism can be connected to culturalism that concentrates on the phenomenologically understood 'subjective' experience of making and responding to culture, whereas interculturalism is more often related to structuralism that views culture as a system of texts, situated in relation to wider systems of discourse or ideology.

The aim of this article is not to discuss whether we should use the term 'intercultural' or 'multicultural'. The difference between the above-mentioned extremes and the pragmatist approach is that even when we recognize the social and cultural nature of people's life,

we do not necessarily entertain the thought that people's lives are determined and fixed for good in certain and only certain cultural patterns or behaviour. Nor do we believe that a fruitful exchange of ideas and understanding between people with distant life experiences could never occur. Although our purpose in this article is not to suggest that traditions and 'authenticity' be romantically respected, yet, cultural differences are not always something to overcome. Rather, they form an endless and rich realm for investigation of our human life. Music is one of these cultural realms where there are normative differences between groups, places and situations; differences that represent the multiplicity of experiences as well as the unfortunate inequality in power relations. Both aspects can be understood as evidence of music being part of the everyday life of human beings.

Our essay is based on the paper presented at the MayDay and AWE symposium in Helsinki (June 2000) that focused on the theme of interdisciplinary connections in music education. The article is presented in a less-common form, as a dialogue, since we, as hosts of the symposium, wanted to connect philosophical perspective to music education so that the voices of a professional philosopher (Pentti) and a music educator (Heidi) still can be identified. Both of us share, however, an interest in classical pragmatism (e.g., John Dewey).

Musical meanings, value and context

Heidi: In his *Music, Mind, and Education* (1988), Professor Swanwick stresses that music has a certain autonomy (see, e.g., Swanwick, 1988: 111). This means that musical values and meanings are embedded in the musical processes rather than formed in the context. This is approximately what his guiding philosopher, Karl Popper, meant by arguing that musical works are inhabitants of the World Three whereas individual perception takes place in the World Two. Swanwick writes, 'musical procedures have some independence from social context. Music has a life of its own. The evidence for this lies in the obvious processes of reinterpretation and transformation: music from one time and place can be utilized elsewhere' (*ibid.*, 112). According to Swanwick, '[musical] meaning is sufficiently abstract to "travel" across cultural boundaries, to step out of its own time and place' (*ibid.*, 101). Various musics of the world are objects and events that carry expressive meaning within a cohesive form (*ibid.*, 113).

Does Swanwick mean then that the meaning of the 4th Symphony of Sibelius is the same in Finland, Botswana or the Amazon? One could think that Swanwick's notion sounds reasonable since we know that, for example, Sibelius is played in America and African music is enjoyed and valued not only in Africa. But is the meaning of Beatles' music the same now as it was in the 1970s? Does the meaning of Sibelius' symphony change when it is played in unusual places? Swanwick explains further that valuing is not a phenomenologically understood subjective enjoyment but a matter of our:

becoming consciously aware of the importance of music as symbolic discourse. – It goes beyond sensory and expressive enjoyment or even pleasure in the fascination of music's structural twists and turns: it is an explicit celebration of 'quality'. (Swanwick, 1994b: 88)

Thus, musical meanings and valuing seem to be somehow independent of 'us', or at least 'me', who experiences it. One explanation for Swanwick's view is that for him music is a

matter of ideas in contrast to material reality (see Swanwick, 1994a: 225). Meaning and value have to do with the sounds within a culture. Nevertheless, musical ideas that seem to arise from culture live then their own ideational life afterwards.

Pentti: I am not sure in what sense Swanwick uses the word 'meaning'. If we take meaning in the sense of importance, significance, then surely music has a meaning in all cultures. In this sense, the meaning of a musical work can be the same in different cultures. In other words, people can take it as a significant experience that they listen to some work. I can understand that music's value as a desirable experience is the same; that is, people in the Amazon and people in Finland may have a good time whilst listening to Sibelius, but this is just that music is experienced as a work of art, that it is an aesthetic experience in John Dewey's sense. But if we take meaning in the sense of content or concept, the issue is quite different.

From a pragmatist point of view, there are no meanings or values that are independent of traditions, habits and practices. Musical processes are actual practical processes. Changes in musical processes entail changes in musical meanings and values. Of course, it depends on the nature and magnitude of these changes in musical processes how significant the changes in meanings are that they involve. Moreover, musical processes cannot be separated from other habitual practical activities, from meanings in general. The same melody played with a violin in a western concert hall and played with a different instrument in an African village most probably expresses different meanings. These experiences surely have quite a different content because of different cultural background. In this sense, these experiences have different meanings, by which I mean (following the principle that meaning is use) that experiences are related to memories and anticipations of habitual action. The meaning of a word (e.g., 'table') consists of habits of using that word in relation to other habitual activities, which have something to do with tables. Musical sounds have meaning in the same sense, but they usually don't have a clear referent (like the word 'table' refers to tables).

If taking music to be 'a matter of ideas' is interpreted to be a matter of meanings, it is not independent of material being. There are no ideas existing in some independent psychical medium, 'in the head' perhaps. Thinking is always a capacity of a living organism, a human being that is interacting with the physical and the social environment. Dewey maintained that thinking is a capacity to anticipate the results of future action (Dewey, 1984: 133). This can be applied to music as well.

Heidi: It is also possible that this insistence of musical autonomy, or at least a degree of autonomy, is due to the need to fix musical meaning into something permanent and so to avoid subjective arbitrariness. Perhaps we should give up the search for the essence of music in sounds, their structures or expressions. In pragmatist terms the question of 'what is art?' could be turned then into the question 'when is art?', 'when is music?' (see Shusterman, 1997). A particular piece of music is not seen as a contextual or autonomous sonic object or process as such but rather as an object or process that functions a certain way in experience. Under different conditions, at different times within different cultures and situations, music organizes our experience differently, as music is connected to life and action in these diverse contexts. An object of art, particular sound structures, becomes a work of art within temporal action in a certain context.

Pentti: I agree with your anti-essentialism but it is not enough to refer only to

temporality ('when is art') and habitual action. The basic point is the distinction between a physical object (an object of art or art product in Dewey's terms) and a phenomenal object (the art product as perceived); the work of art as a specific experience, *an* experience, as Dewey put it (see Dewey, 1934). Art products can 'travel from place to place' but what makes them art (music) is not in any mystical way embodied in these objects. The aesthetic quality is a property of an experience that is not a means to some other experience: it is a consummatory experience (see also Määttänen, 2000). Art products may travel (sound patterns may be repeated similarly in different places), but people who experience them are not the same people. The work of art as an experience is not the same.

Heidi: Swanwick does not claim, however, that music is static in its essence. At least musical sounds as such, the product, change constantly. He writes that,

[music] travels and (like language – is continually refashioned, adapted, reinterpreted; creating 'new human values', organising thought and feeling, transcending the limits of local culture and the personal self. Every new composition or improvisation is an action capable of inflecting and regenerating cultural heritages. (Swanwick, 1994a: 220)

Swanwick clearly wants to emphasize the innovative side of music-making. Music-making should not be viewed from the repetition or reproduction view, which is sometimes overstressed when music educators talk about skills, studying musical pieces *par excellence* or even (cultural) authenticity. He writes that:

musicians tend to go beyond the immediate needs of ritual or community. They decorate, elaborate, improvise, they borrow and adapt. They rarely simply reproduce. For this reason it is nonsense to say that we cannot understand music without understanding the culture from which it came. The music *is* the culture. We enter the minds of others through their products – the things they make, do and say. (Swanwick, 1994a: 222; see also Swanwick, 1988: 112)

Pentti: Swanwick seems to think that music is a kind of universal language that all people understand just because they are human beings. It is no doubt possible that such elements exist. There are, after all, certain universal features in all natural languages. But that does not entail that we understand foreign languages just like that. And the fact that we can get on with a conversation quite happily does not guarantee that we understand all expressions exactly in the same way. Musical meanings are looser because there are fewer external criteria that we can use in analysing them.

Heidi: Swanwick claims that music exists 'in some degree' outside of human (contextual and social) action. He seems to fear that if we see music as cultural and social, music is reduced to an 'epiphenomena of the social', if I may use Blacking's (1979) expression, and that we have to carry all the rest of the culture with us in education to be able to approach a 'foreign' music. Swanwick's arguments against Vulliamy and Shepherd in the 1980s echo the paradigm he has carried on later. Swanwick (1982) criticizes Vulliamy and Shepherd of searching obvious referents for musical meaning in the outer world. He stresses that when music is thought to be ultimately and inherently social we ignore 'personality disposition, specific musical ideas arising within and across musical traditions, and the available skills and technologies that determine, to some extent, what is possible in music' (*ibid.*, 138). Consequently, Swanwick argues that meaning of music cannot be linked ultimately to social significance. Otherwise, it would not be possible to see how anyone can enter the music of

other cultures and find it significant or powerful, find deviations from normality or perceive the particular personal gestures of a composer or performer. We relate to music in terms of these aspects across historical time and cultural differences (*ibid.*, 138–9). Vulliamy and Shepherd (1983) reply that the problem with Swanwick's understanding of a social significance for music is 'in assuming that the social world is constituted exclusively by concrete people and events, thus denying the validity of the social structuring which is coextensive with those concrete people and events' (*ibid.*, 191).

Apart from his individualistic view of cognition in general, I think that Swanwick does not acknowledge music as generating social and cultural experience, and that musical products are used as generators in a particular and unique way. In a pragmatist framework, musical interaction and meaning is to be understood in a wider sense. Musical meaning does not appear by referring only to the internal processes in a musical piece (or tradition) or to things outside of music, but entail also the experiential level, the perspective what 'we' want to experience within this music, while using these musical sounds. Moreover, culture is to be understood, as Swanwick argues, not as 'sets of fixed, socially conditioned actions without the possibility of reflection, reconstruction or resistance' (Swanwick, 1999b: 25), but as a changing realm, that makes the individual development possible. A living culture is a changing culture.

Pentti: Contextuality and the connection to practice, habitual action is due to the nature of experience. Pragmatism emphasizes that the framework of all experience is an individual's practical relationship to the environment (nature, artefacts and the social environment). And practice is always a social phenomenon. Further, all meanings (musical meanings included) are tied to this practical framework (see Dewey, 1958). It is the individual who has an experience but the meanings that give the content of this experience are tied to common practice and are therefore shared meanings. Even if an object of art may travel, social practice does not travel. An object of art, which is transferred to another context, is always experienced differently and it is, strictly speaking, a different experience, a different work of art with different meanings.

Heidi: It seems that Swanwick approaches the pragmatist understanding of experience as he writes in his recent article that:

[the] aesthetic is necessary but not sufficient condition for the artistic. In whatever way the concept may be construed, and certainly if it centres on sensory awareness, aesthetic experience has to be seen in a dialectical relationship with the traditions and conventions in which any artwork or event is located. This relationship is not simply a matter of transmitting a culture or a set of cultural values. There are of course obvious connections between the music of particular groups and their life style, age, and social position. But this is not to say that music in some way embodies a social order. (Swanwick, 1999a: 133)

However, his understanding of the relationship between experience and social meanings or habits seems to be different from ours.

Pentti: It is not the question of a social order being or not being embodied by music. From a pragmatist point of view, all meanings are ultimately social habits. Peirce's position is that habits of action are beliefs. Wittgenstein followed the principle 'meaning is use' in his later philosophy. Meanings are not ideas 'in the head' (see also Määttänen, 1993). Music is one form of social co-operation.

Heidi: Moreover, 'culture' does not refer to an essential entity that is either out of our reach or transferred as a whole to the individual consciousness. With this Swanwick would probably agree. He writes, however, that:

[distinctive] musical styles are maintained and developed through give-and-take in an interpretative community ... Music can be seen thus to take its place interactively within a cultural environment without necessarily being culturally determined. (Swanwick, 1999a: 133)

Culture and context, for Swanwick, seem to be concepts that have a conserving and stable connotation and he rather promotes a view wherein music is a moving and changing social endeavour. Contextuality (which to me means that we see practices as social, culturally embedded and in relation to the material environment as well), however, is an avoidable frailty of art but can be an evidence of depth or quality. For instance, Hall (2000) has written that low-context communication has never been an art form. Hall thinks that meaning and context are unavoidably tied together, and that good art is always contextual. He argues that low-context art (whatever it means) releases its content immediately and requires no deeper knowledge and is thus not ranked highly in quality (*ibid.*, 37). Although we do not need to agree with Hall in his criteria of quality, he represents the other line of the debate concerning context and music.

Pentti: How can something 'take its place interactively within a cultural environment without ... being culturally determined'? If Swanwick observes that a musical style developed in western cultural environment is maintained somewhere else, we have only his observation (or perhaps observations of other western people). But his observation is determined by his own cultural context. He has no direct access to the mind of the people living in this other cultural environment. They probably experience the music differently because of the different cultural background. At least we have no means of knowing whether they experience it in the same way. Even two people of the same linguistic community cannot know that they have similar ideas when they use the same word. How could it take place in music? In his latest book Swanwick speaks about the 'space between' us which is 'full of ideas articulated in symbolic forms' (see Swanwick, 1999b: 31, Figure 2). Symbolic forms (like sentences in a book) are the same for all of us but the meanings we attach to them are more or less different. If he means by ideas some immaterial entities (like his earlier books seem to suggest), then I don't agree at all. If he can accept the view that ideas (meanings) are our habits of using these symbolic forms so that they are 'between us' in the sense that social phenomena are not reduced to individual persons, then I agree completely.

Heidi: Handel played by Soweto children does indeed even sound different (more rhythmic) from what we are used to in Finland at least, although the Soweto children study the same scores. Nevertheless, Swanwick points out 'that musical structure depends on our having musical expectations' (Swanwick, 1988: 63) and musical structure for its part 'is simply the effectiveness with which one expressive gesture is heard to relate to another' (*ibid.*, 31). Furthermore, musical expectations are contextual, as any thoughts or feelings 'occur in the context of our personal and cultural history' (Swanwick, 1999b: 20). So, it looks like we would not disagree that much after all. Music as experienced is always conditioned by the context and culture we inhabit.

Music in context: educational implications

Heidi: Pragmatists see music as connected to life and action. Music should be seen as experience and not as sounds. Experience in pragmatist terms is therefore not a private realm but rather simultaneously subjective and collective. It is tied to (social-cultural) actions and practices. From this perspective, music is contextual. Music can cross many values and many practices but it does not need to be instrumental to anything else than to good life in general.

Pentti: Yes, the Deweyan conception of aesthetic experience does not deny that music may be a means for other experiences. The point is that these other values are not what makes the musical experience an aesthetic experience, a work of art. Good experiences that are valuable as such (aesthetic experiences), not as a means, are important constituents of good life.

Heidi: One could ask, then, shouldn't we, as music teachers, focus on 'the internal matters' of a musical practice, what is often called purely musical or purely aesthetic? Shouldn't we try to define and think of musical values in terms of musical processes and ignore every other 'less important' constituent of music or musical experience? One could think that isn't this exactly what Swanwick means when he writes that music education is about 'working with musical processes themselves as though they had a degree of autonomy that transcendence of these culturally restricted worlds becomes a possibility' (Swanwick, 1988: 106; see also Swanwick, 1992: 99).

Pentti: Concentrating on 'internal goods of a musical practice' tends to separate musically consummatory experiences from other aesthetic experiences. However, I see no reason to deny the possibility (or even desirability) of connecting musical practices to other practices in order to achieve better conditions for good life. After all, there have been and are still musical practices that have a political message. Shusterman refers to Bob Dylan who answered the question about the content of his songs: 'If I told you what our music was really about, we'd probably all get arrested' (Shusterman, 2000: 188). There were also clear political connotations in Wilhelm Müller's *Winterreise* composed by Franz Schubert, to take another example (Gad, 1989: 119–41). Knowledge about this aspect has a considerable effect on the musical experience aroused by these songs. The political aspect is in some cases an essential element of a musical practice.

Heidi: Swanwick writes that although the arts share characteristics with other human activities, 'it is the special function of art, to strengthen, to extend, to illuminate, to transform, and, ultimately, to make life worth living, more "like life"' (Swanwick, 1988: 50). He refers to Dewey in arguing that:

[the] subject of the arts is human consciousness, deliberately extended and explored. This is why art has been often linked with dreaming or 'other-worldliness'. Art intensifies, draws together and gives us not the confusion of mere experience, but what Dewey calls 'an experience.' (*ibid.*)

For Dewey, even the function of philosophy was to make life worth living, to transform and extend our socially shared everyday life. Yet, music, as a special form of bettering life, is not interchangeable with philosophy. Rather, it is impossible for human beings to put aside all other interests, beliefs, hopes and habits of life while composing, performing, listening

and enjoying music. Dewey's philosophy of art aimed at removing art from its secularized compartmentalization, from functioning as 'a wishfully imaginary alternative to the real', as Shusterman (2000: 21) has argued. Music is part of our everyday life. Artists know, for example, that a political message is often much more powerful when expressed within a more emotional-related (and thus body-related) musical context than as a verbal statement. Why should this depreciate music's status, artistic quality or any other pedagogically important matter?

Pentti: I think that Dewey's purpose is not to compare 'mere' experience with an experience but rather experience as a means to other experiences, like for instance the experience of buying a ticket in order to go to a concert to have aesthetic experiences.

Heidi: On the other hand, I don't think that music is automatically taking the student to 'another world'. Efforts to avoid any 'clear' cultural, political, ethical or religious links in pedagogical material do not guarantee that students can achieve good experiences (aesthetic, flow, etc.). On the contrary, for example, a rap musical against social problems in school is engaging the students in meaningful music-making and, yet, has a clear ethical purpose in the educational environment. Secondly, admitting that music is linked with our contextual life does not mean that these 'links' are necessarily taught as subject content. It is more important that we realize that music is part of our students' life in various ways and that in music education we could profit from this instead of reifying music.

Pentti, I think that one's concern can still be whether – according to our thinking – it is then possible to learn anything distant and foreign if sounds (objects) can be transferred but not practices that are the ways we use and experience these sounds and the ways we act with the sounds. If the function of sounds is tied to social practices, how can we learn other people's practices? This was actually Swanwick's argument for musical autonomy: because we *can* learn other people's music, there must then be a realm where music exists as independent of particular contexts.

Pentti: We are all human beings and social practices are not entirely different; we have something in common which makes it possible to some extent to understand other cultures. But, in the final instance, it is possible to learn other people's practices only by participating in those practices. After moving to another country, people gradually learn the local habits and understand them better and better, but it takes time.

Heidi: This is why David Elliott (1995), for example, has emphasized performing music and that our performance should at least approach the 'original' or authentic practice. However, as the authority in pragmatist terms is located in consequences for the present and the future, a pragmatist music educator should then recognize the temporal-local change in musical understanding and accept the idea of 'recontextualizing' in teaching and learning different musics (see also White, 1998). We can therefore say that musical knowledge, whatever it means in different connections, is born and reborn in praxis. Van Oers (1998) argues that the subject matter in education should be seen as a continuous process of *embedding contexts in contexts*. The idea that the original context could be transferred into educational situation is based on one kind of decontextualization. In order to become knowledge, the subject matter needs to be integrated into the students' life. South African freedom songs in Finnish Baptist churches in the late 70s, which is my first personal experience of these songs, did not organize experience in a similar way as the songs did for black South Africans during the same period of time or even today. Also,

the Finnish Sami songs are experienced differently by Sami people in Lapland compared to urban Finns in Helsinki. Music in education follows the same principle. The wisdom of a teacher seems to be rather how to embed a particular musical context productively in the particular educational context than how to treat music as autonomous.

Pentti: I can tell from my experience that North American spirituals do not organize experience in Finland in the same way as they do in USA. The social and political message, which is evident in the original tradition, does not come up. The religious connotations are dominating and they get their meaning from the local circumstances in Finland which makes the musical experience quite different.

Heidi: From this follows that as educators we have to know the given pedagogical context and not take for granted that 'music itself' speaks. The teacher should not reduce music into 'a Third World Inhabitant' that is self-sufficient. Hence, Swanwick (1988) also notices that music does not seem to always be 'autonomous' but is related to most contextual and situational things. Swanwick quite rightly warns that,

music can be culturally exclusive if the sound-spectrum is strange; if expressive character is strongly linked with a particular culture or sub-culture and if structural expectations are inappropriate. All of these elements, especially expressive characterisation, can be amplified by labelling and cultural stereotyping. (Swanwick, 1988: 101; see also Swanwick, 1992: 98)

He mentions the Rolling Stones as one of the bad educational examples: 'Through education, we look for the development of mind, for the aesthetic raising of consciousness, not the anaesthesia of noise and physical catharsis, though these may have an important role elsewhere' (Swanwick, 1988: 101). Swanwick solves the problem by advising teachers to separate musical value from other 'cultural chains' and 'to avoid strongly culturally loaded idioms until their context has eroded, leaving behind what there is of musical value' (*ibid.*, 111). 'The task of education is to reduce the power of such stereotypes through a lively exploration of musical procedures, phenomena which can be relatively independent of cultural ownership' (*ibid.*, 101). However, his other example, South African Venda music, while transforming lives in Venda society, seems to transcend the context. I argue, that Venda musical sounds – or the Rolling Stones for that matter – can potentially function as transformative objects, but still it is questionable that Venda music transforms lives in Finland, for example, in a similar way as in South Africa. This is because the meanings and values of the music are not the same in these two contexts.

The fact that human beings in a particular context and under particular conditions use sounds in order to gain good (consummatory) experiences is the reason why one kind of music can be stereotypical in one educational context and a consummatory experience in another educational context. We do not necessarily need to wait for music to become 'a classic' to be able to use it in education. Neither is it always good to strive towards 'neutrality'. Instead of distancing music from experience, reifying and abstracting, we should strive toward better integration between musical products and our students' experience.

Pentti: I don't think that it is possible to separate musical values completely from other 'cultural chains'. The only way for me to understand this is that an illusion of transcendence is based on the fact that all human beings have some common cultural background just because of our common evolutionary history. There is no need for expressions like

'music transcends cultural context' or 'ideas independent of matter' etc., as in fact no such transcendence takes place.

Heidi: Could you explain once more, what you mean by saying, 'no such transcendence takes place'?

Pentti: Swanwick refers to a general dictionary when he explicates the meaning of transcendence. In a philosophical context, the word usually has the stronger meaning that transcendental issues are independent of our natural and experiential existence. For instance, some philosophers claim that with a 'pure reason', we have access to ideal entities or conceptual structures that cannot be perceived, or we may examine the transcendental limits of our experience from inside. Music may be independent of certain local cultural contexts but not in this philosophical sense. If music has played a role in our becoming this species, as has been claimed (see Donald, 1991), then it is understandable that music is relatively independent of local cultures. I would like to reserve the word 'transcendental' for the philosophical usage.

Heidi: In my understanding, Swanwick is worried that sometimes music is related too much to irrelevant matters and stereotypes, like in his example of a teenager who listened to Led Zeppelin but who, according to someone else, had not been dressed appropriately in a leather jacket, etc. Those irrelevant matters he counts as cultural and social (and maybe material) (see Swanwick, 1992: 95). Therefore, he writes that,

[there] is a sense, though, in which music can be seen as objective, 'out there', to some extent independent of our particular preferences and prejudices. This is important, for it is in the autonomy of musical objects or events that education has some scope, a little room for manoeuvre. If we are to accept that what we perceive is totally shaped by what we believe, then we can neither teach nor learn. We might just as well be the mechanical inhabitants of a clockwork universe, where everything conforms to pre-specified rules. (Swanwick, 1988: 95; see also Swanwick, 1992: 98)

Indeed, in the framework of psychological reductionism and individual atomism the notion of 'internalized' culture is determinist. In the pragmatist framework, however, as explained above, experience is both individual and socio-cultural. In Swanwick's solution, 'what is', is 'what we want it to be'. Swanwick wants to view music *as if* it were autonomous. This can of course be a good hypothetical starting point for critical pedagogy and change in some cases (when first acknowledged what music is in order to know what it should not be) but would not alter the fact that music *is* cultural and social and that stereotyping, etc., exist. Even when teachers have goals and ideals, they have to teach within a context, and any change and transformation imply prior existence in this context (Dewey, 1998: 132). In the end, I argue, a reflective pedagogical practice has to recognize the contextual nature of music as well as education in order to be able to change reality, change culture and education, in order to be able to use practical *as-ifs* as tools for change. As White (1998) writes,

[a] pragmatic analysis of curriculum, pedagogy, and images uses an engagement that is not given and not received but constructed in a relationship between content covered and those questions and conversations that emerge from the lives of students and their communities. (*ibid.*, 222).

Pragmatist conclusions

Heidi: We have now agreed, presumably along with Swanwick, that people experience music, even the same musical sounds, differently in different times and different contexts. The fact that music changes within time and context leads, according to our pragmatist interpretation, neither to intentional decontextualizing of music nor to post-modern arbitrariness of interpretation or experience (see also, Määttä & Westerlund, 1999). This means that the same musical sounds can have different meanings depending of the social context. Swanwick, however, keeps on turning the discussion concerning the musical meaning and value to the objects or sonic processes. According to him, the fact that we are able to learn music has to be evidence of a degree of autonomy of music. Musical discourse is somehow, and on some levels, a transcultural category. Swanwick explains how the Venda borrowed their neighbourhood people's music, and so transcend their culture (see Swanwick, 1988: 106). However, as we argued here, the Venda obviously used borrowed material for their own purposes to organize their experience as they preferred. Change in musical sounds does not make the musical practice a transnationally understood object. We as Finns do not understand the meanings of Venda music without taking part in the musical practice, studying step by step. Blacking claimed that you have to be born Venda to be able to understand their music thoroughly (Blacking, 1995: 58). People make music for themselves, for various functions, uses and purposes, to improve their life, not in order for it to live its own life. Indeed, '[music] is a social art' (Swanwick, 1994b: 167). That might be why new sonic elements do not usually change completely the cultural ethos although even that is possible. Puccini's 'homework on ancient Chinese' (Swanwick, 1988: 110) was not what Chinese people would consider as Chinese music. Moreover, certain musical practices seem to fulfil our human consummatory needs and satisfaction while being more stable than some others are. That can be accepted as a sign of the plurality and richness of human practices (see also Westerlund, 1999).

Instead of cementing unquestionable grounds for musical experience, we should therefore be more interested in reconstructing our practices and institutions in order to improve the experienced quality of our individual and social lives. I return to Swanwick's example of Venda music. If Blacking's professional opinion is taken seriously, it is not possible to learn to live musically like the Venda and be creative like the Venda within Venda music in a Finnish secondary school. Blacking wrote that '[music] is a synthesis of cognitive processes which are present in culture and in the human body: the form it takes, and the effects it has on people, are generated by the social experiences of human bodies in different cultural environments' (Blacking, 1973: 89). Thus, 'the cognitive systems underlying different styles of music will be better understood if music is not detached from its context and regarded as "sonic objects" but treated as *humanly organized sound* whose patterns are related to the social and cognitive processes of a particular society and culture' (Blacking, 1995: 55). However, it is possible to approach Venda culture, and students can be creative in their own way (although that is not just an arbitrary individual way). The music of Venda might transform Finnish students' lives in the Finnish context. In this sense, I can sympathize with Swanwick's concern that ends up in cutting off so-called non-musical ties. We can come closer to a foreign or distant culture but, on the other hand, it

has to be accepted that we have our limits, our existential conditions for knowing, understanding and experiencing.

Pentti: So, should non-musical ties be cut or not?

Heidi: I understand your concern. Many music educators accept the idea that musical sound patterns, which are often called a particular kind of music, are artistic and not social-cultural in nature. Culture and social matters are then presented as fixed, something to avoid in creative artistic work. Moreover, music is not usually understood as a practice or action but as an object; and similarly, culture is understood as objects, clothing, etc. instead of action and behaviour. These cultural 'things' are sometimes also called the non-musical side of music. It is difficult to say how crucially other (so-called non-musical) things, which we might relate to musical sound making processes, affect the experience. It is, in my opinion, a practice-specific, situational and contextual matter. I disagree, however, with Swanwick's earlier argument that we should categorically and purposefully cut the non-musical ties even when defined in this way. Rather, we should admit that the ties are somewhat different in different contexts. This means recontextualizing music, not that it becomes suddenly less social or less contextual.

However, I think it is important to think what is relevant and adequate in the given educational context. This is since, as White writes, 'meaning relationships are not a mental additive, suspended above experience like a patriarchal judge, but rather they are coextensive with other aspects of experience' (White, 1998: 224). We do not need to wear the Lappish dress, for instance, to be able to sing Sami *joiku*. We may do it of course, but singing *joiku* (particularly as a group) in a city school is anyway not the same as doing it in a Lapp hut. We might use *joiku* singing in a new musical context; arrange the musical setting differently from that of Lapland. However, it might be crucial to know how and why *joiku* is performed in Lapland to widen the view and understanding of the specialities of that kind of music-making and to gain *better engagement* in music-making, better experience. Swanwick has also reminded us that sometimes a musical practice can be inappropriate in certain educational contexts. In my view, however, decisions depend on what is relevant, possible and good (in terms of consequences) in a particular educational situation and context. Music teachers have not a general but *special* interests in culture(s). Context is not merely a background, but rather forms the conditions of possibility of something. It is made, unmade and remade within and by the educational practice (see also Grossberg, 2000). Also, the question of musical understanding is after all a matter of degree not an all-or-nothing matter.

I don't believe, therefore, that there is a common body of culturally neutral musical knowledge that every child should learn. Since every country is historically and politically in a slightly different situation, there are first of all national differences, which affect curricular and other decisions. Secondly, we have local differences, including the differences of skills of teachers or interests of students. Therefore, solving educational questions effectively requires a teacher's knowledge of context and reflection-in-situation. As Chávez Chávez writes,

[multicultural] education's inherent complexity demands that pedagogies *apprehend* and *value* the personal-social knowledge complexity that fountains from diverse and pluralistic contexts. [Knowing] how to do the 'right thing' is a result of having multiple perspectives so needed in order not to be 'blinded by our own biases'. (Chávez Chávez, 1998: 13–14)

For that reason, in pragmatist terms, both music and education are contextual in nature. Yet, it is good to discuss these questions in a transcultural or transnational level in order to enhance change in particular educational contexts.

References

- BLACKING, J. (1973) *How Musical is Man?* Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.
- BLACKING, J. (1979) 'The study of man as music-maker.' In J. Blacking & J. W. Kealiinohomoku (Eds), *The Performing Arts: Music and Dance*, pp. 4–15. The Hague, Paris & New York: Mouton Publishers.
- BLACKING, J. (1995) *Music, Culture & Experience: Selected Papers of John Blacking*. Edited by R. Byron. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- CHÁVEZ CHÁVEZ, R. (1998) 'Engaging the multicultural education terrain: a holographic montage for engagers.' In R. Chávez Chávez & J. O'Donnell (Eds), *Speaking the Unpleasant. The Politics of (non) Engagement in the Multicultural Education Terrain*, pp. 6–15. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- CUSHNER, K. (1998) 'Intercultural education from an international perspective: an introduction.' In K. Cushner (Ed), *International Perspectives on Intercultural Education*, pp. 1–14. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Ass.
- DEWEY, J. (1934) *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigee.
- DEWEY, J. (1958) *Experience and Nature*. New York: Dover Publications.
- DEWEY, J. (1984) *The Quest for Certainty: The Later Works, (1925–1953). Vol. 4*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- DEWEY, J. (1998) *The Essential Dewey, Vol. 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy*. L. A. Hickman & T. M. Alexander (Eds). Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- DONALD, M. (1991) *Origins of the Modern Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ELLIOTT, D. (1995) *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- GAD, G. (1989) 'Wilhelm Müller. Selbstbehauptung und Selbstverleugnung'. Inauguraldissertation, Freien Universität Berlin.
- GROSSBERG, L. (2000) 'Contexts of cultural studies?' In S. Leppänen & J. Kuorri (Eds), *Inescapable Horizon. Culture and Context*, pp. 27–47. Publications of the Research Unit for Contemporary Culture 64. University of Jyväskylä.
- HALL, E. T. (2000) 'Context and meaning.' In A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, pp. 34–43. 9th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth publishing Company.
- KWAMI, R. (1996) 'Music education in and for a multicultural society.' In C. Plummeridge (Ed), *Music Education: Trends and Issues*, pp. 59–76. London: University of London.
- MÄÄTTÄNEN, P. (1993) 'Action and Experience, a Naturalistic Approach to Cognition.' *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, Dissertationes Humanarum Litterarum* 64, Helsinki.
- MÄÄTTÄNEN, P. (2000) 'Aesthetic experience: a problem in praxialism.' *Finnish Journal of Music Education*, 5, 1–2, 148–53.
- MÄÄTTÄNEN, P. & Westerlund, H. (1999) 'Tradition, practice, and musical meaning. A pragmatist approach to music education.' *Nordic Research in Music Education, Yearbook*, 3, 33–8.
- NKETIA, J. H. K. (1988) 'Exploring intercultural dimensions of music in education.' In J. Dobbs (Ed), *A World view of Music Education. International Music Education*, pp. 96–106. *ISME Yearbook*, vol. XV.
- VAN OERS, B. (1998) 'The fallacy of decontextualization.' *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 5, 2, 135–42.
- SAMOVAR, L. A. & Porter, R. E. (Eds) (2000) *Intercultural Communication. A Reader*. 9th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- SHUSTERMAN, R. (1997). *Practising Philosophy. Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*. New York & London: Routledge.

- SHUSTERMAN, R. (2000) *Pragmatist Aesthetics. Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. 2nd edition. Lanham, Boulder, New York & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- SWANWICK, K. (1982) 'Problems of a sociological approach to pop music – A case study.' In J. Dobbs (Ed), *Tradition and Change in Music and Music Education*, pp. 136–41. *International Society ISME Yearbook*.
- SWANWICK, K. (1988) *Music, Mind, and Education*. London: Routledge.
- SWANWICK, K. (1992) 'What makes music musical?' In J. Paynter, T. Howell, R. Orton & P. Seymour (Eds), *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, Vol. 1, pp. 81–104. London & New York: Routledge.
- SWANWICK, K. (1994a) 'Authenticity and the reality of musical experience.' In H. Lees (Ed), *Musical Connections: Tradition and Change. Proceedings of the 21st World Conference of the International Society for Music Education held in Tampa, Florida, USA*, pp. 215–26. Auckland: International Society for Music Education.
- SWANWICK, K. (1994b) *Musical Knowledge. Intuition, Analysis and Music Education*. London & New York: Routledge.
- SWANWICK, K. (1999a) 'Music education: closed or open?' *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, **33**, **4**, 127–41.
- SWANWICK, K. (1999b) *Teaching Music Musically*. London & New York: Routledge.
- VULLIAMY, G. & SHEPHERD, J. (1983) 'A sociological approach to pop music in teaching: a response to Swanwick'. In J. Dobbs (Ed), *Music for a Small Planet*, pp. 189–97. *International Music Education ISME Yearbook*, Vol. XI.
- WESTERLUND, H. (1999) 'World musics in education. Philosophical perspectives to multicultural music education.' *Finnish Journal of Music Education*, **4**, **2–3**, 28–41.
- WHITE, J. H. (1998) 'Pragmatism and art: tools for change.' *Studies in Art Education*, **39**, **3**, 215–27.