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Cultural Diversity in Music Education:

Directions and Challenges for the 21st

Century by Patricia Shehan Campbell, John Drummond, Peter Dunbar-Hall, Keith Howard, Huib Schippers & Trevor Wiggins (Eds). Brisbane: Australian Academic Press, 2005. 206 pp, no price given, paperback. ISBN 1875378596

The diverse musical practices of various cultures, near or far, and the values they represent, have entered our consciousness in ways and at a rate unimaginable only a few decades ago. These practices need to be investigated, for they are relevant to the music curricula we promote through our actions. If, 'at its heart, curriculum is a matter of values' (Regelski, 2005: 220), the music education curriculum in contemporary Western mainstream schools has much to learn about values of 'others' through their musical practices.

In their introduction to *Cultural Diversity in Music Education: Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century*, editors Patricia Campbell and Huib Schippers note that the emphasis on notation and analytic teaching methods in some areas of music education is receding. They observe an increase in inclusive practices in which diverse contents and pedagogies are brought into students' experiences of music in schools, noting that 'issues such as context and authenticity are increasingly approached from their delightfully confusing contemporary realities' (p. v). In my many years of involvement with music teacher education at the tertiary level, opportunities to experience delightful confusion seem limited. The emphasis on notation and analytic teaching represents a belief about

the nature and value of musical knowledge which is cultivated, ingrained and unexamined in many mainstream music teacher education programmes.

Strict adherence to narrow definitions of what it means to be musical can preclude the development of multiple, diverse conceptions of musical knowledge, musical value and musical understanding. Editors Campbell and Schippers note that the University of Lund Academy at Malmo offers total immersion programmes that enable students to experience different musical cultures. Such courses provide students with opportunities to challenge their assumptions about musical knowledge, value and understanding. The readings in this collection are useful for stimulating discussion, reflection, and the sharing of experiences. They also serve to challenge cherished assumptions, and to encourage readers to visit, or re-visit their personal philosophies of music education.

Cultural Diversity in Music Education: Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century is a collection of 20 papers that were originally presented at the VIth International Symposium on Cultural Diversity in Music Education (CDIME), held in Brisbane, Australia in 2005. These papers are well worth reading and discussing.

The papers are grouped into four sections. In Section One, 'Challenges and Issues', four authors set forth philosophical, theoretical and applied issues in multicultural music education. Section Two, 'Approaches to Teaching and Learning', comprises five papers addressing music teaching and learning practices, giving special attention to alternative pedagogies. In Section Three, 'Voices from the Classroom', three authors discuss applied issues in formal music education settings, and finally Section Four presents eight case studies from Asia, Africa and Australia.

The authors' backgrounds are diverse, and include music education research and

practice, ethnomusicology, composition and performance – and, in some cases, a combination of two or more of these fields. Therefore, the issues around cultural diversity in music education are approached from quite different perspectives.

The papers encourage readers to think about what it means to be educated, musically and culturally. Most speak from first-hand experience in musical traditions that are different from their own, offering an ‘etic’ perspective – a view from the outside, where the familiar is made strange. John Drummond provides an overview for the discourse that follows in the remaining papers, setting forth the major issues in the field. He presents four often-expressed rationales for multicultural education. Two major trajectories emerge from this introductory chapter: one is musical, the other social. First, Drummond points out the obvious benefit of experiencing the traditions of other musical cultures, namely the contribution to one’s musical and pedagogical development. Second, he notes – and questions – the claim that participation in the cultural practices of others has a positive effect on attitudes and understanding. However, he mentions that the latter claim of positive transformation as a rationale for ‘world’ music education is likely to be a more compelling argument than the musical benefits claimed on its behalf. His presentation of identity issues that arise when students encounter cultural difference is another rich field of particular interest to music teacher educators.

Every music educator’s library should include a copy of this collection. With the exception of one or two which I thought were less successful, the papers address a wide range of topics, providing a rich field of thought for discussion. The ones that spoke most strongly to me were: identity, didacticism, the provision of environments that are conducive to learning, enculturation

of students, function and meaning in music, the relations between language and rhythm, ‘school’ (formal) pedagogy and knowledge versus indigenous (non-formal) pedagogy and knowledge, explanation versus ‘watch and do’, the consequences of institutionalizing traditional musics, association of spirituality with musical form, reading notation versus aural learning, and commodification of the musics and practices of minority groups. The papers are presented in accessible language, thus ensuring a broad readership. I plan to assign some of these readings to my undergraduate students in music education.

One issue which is notable for its absence is the power of lyrics and actions in musical games. From the perspective of cultural diversity, this is an area that has always interested me, since my early introduction to the subversive power of song to express sentiments around such social issues as slavery, civil rights, union organising, social revolution, and so forth. This topic relates to Drummond’s second trajectory – the issue of social transformation through critical engagement with the musical cultures of the ‘other.’

Critical multiculturalism challenges us to think about diversity in terms of power relations (May, 1999). Social theorist Bourdieu (1993) talks about the investment of social and cultural capital in ‘fields of production’. In music curricula we can ask ‘Whose social and cultural capital will be invested, or represented in particular circumstances of time and place?’ If we think of curriculum-making as a political enterprise in which the myths of those wielding power influence students’ values and views of the world in particular ways, it is clear that it matters whose stories get to be told. Song lyrics can be likened to Applebee’s (1978) ‘stories’, in the sense that they carry the values and the myths of a people (Russell, 2006a). The music classroom can be seen as the ‘field of

production' where myth-making is embedded in musical choices and actions.

My experience working with Inuit student teachers in a music course in Nunavut Arctic College taught me how fundamentally contrasting world views emerge when spaces are created where students can invest their social and cultural capital. My student teachers invented and adapted, culturally appropriate and socially relevant song lyrics, rhythmic chants and accompanying actions to create musical games. Their inventions acknowledged, enacted, and celebrated the Inuit intimate relationship with the natural world in ways that are unknown in postmodern, industrialised, urban societies. One of the games depicted, in actions and words, hunting a seal, killing it, and eating the raw meat. The game expressed the excitement, the danger, the skills, and especially the *joy* of a successful hunt. I interpreted this game as an expression of Inuit mythology, enacted through the symbolic media of lyrics, chanting and actions (Russell, 2006b). The activity was consistent with the subject matter of other Inuit cultural products such as carvings, tapestries, prints, poetry and legends. The seal hunt was enacted in ways that would be unpalatable to many of our urban student teachers. Yet, the expressed goal of encounters with diverse cultures is to foster greater understanding of one another's world views. A nagging question for educators is, how do we foster such understanding? Should we engage only with those musical practices and the values they represent that do *not* challenge our fundamental world views? Should we deliberately provoke discomfort? Dawn Joseph's chapter in *Cultural Diversity* addresses this issue from an African perspective.

Joseph explains the form-function relations of spirituality and musical form in

African music. In today's politically sensitive climate many educational jurisdictions, mention of musical experience as spiritual is absent from official documents. Myths, sacredly held and reflected in our musical choices compete for dominance. If we embrace cultural diversity in music education in a critical way we just might come face to face with underlying belief systems that may clash with our own and push us out of our comfort zones. How do we accommodate these differences? Perhaps without deliberately engaging our students with values and practices that clash with theirs we are only dabbling, rather than deepening, as Joseph argues. This book will stimulate thought on this topic and many others, and deserves to be widely read.

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