Intercultural musicianship: a hybrid form of music exchange across the globe

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Abstract

Cultural boundaries are no longer geographically dictated. This intercultural music making initiative made provision for the social cohesion of the North-West University, South Africa Tswana students as they prepared musical artefacts for 'export' that convey, confirm and explore their culture of birth. Advancement in emerging digital technologies assisted to facilitate the export through video, on-line chat room and web-cam communication. Such technology supports the conveyance of originality, authenticity and context. The exporters were not remotely detached from the musical artefact but were connected digitally. The 'importers', Charles Sturt University, Australia were able to access the musical artefacts through repeated, close and careful encounters. The students in Australia were then tasked with having to create a performance of the musical artefact using Orff melodic and non-melodic instruments. In so doing a hybrid musical exchange was achieved. This intercultural music exchange results in a collective and participatory music-making initiative.

Providing opportunity for intercultural exchange

Globalisation and the rapid advancement of technology have contributed to the expansion of Marshall McLuhan's (1967) envisioned 'global village' and intercultural exchange. Communication technology enables us to link and transact simultaneously with events from the most remote parts of the world and connects us to persons we may never meet in person (Martin & Nakayama, 2007). Such meetings and transactions open pathways to and possibilities for intercultural exchange. The ideal of intercultural exchange is fraught with complexities and challenges, while concurrently providing opportunity. One such opportunity is the extension of the traditional classroom setting to include community representatives where the teacher/lecturer is not the source and/or provider of knowledge but rather the facilitator of learning experiences. This article reflects on a pilot project, *Orff-Tswana*, focussing on intercultural music exchange between students of North-West University (NW), South Africa and Charles Sturt University (CSU), Australia. The *Orff-Tswana* intercultural music-making initiative (**Figure 1**) encouraged dialogue and social transaction between two disparate groups of students that resulted in a collective and participatory music-making initiative supported by the original custodians of the musical artefact preparing the material for 'export' ensuring authenticity and capturing the context of tradition.

Details of the project are presented as an exemplar of how intercultural music-making traditions can be shared and experienced trans-nationally by utilising digital technologies for communication between trans-national higher education institutions. The project has laid the foundation for further research to recognise how individuals relate to intercultural music artefact exchange in varying and multiple ways.

[insert here] Figure 1:   Orff-Tswana: an intercultural music-making initiative

Communicating with digital technologies

While anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have long insisted that musical traditions be seen in the context of the wider culture of which they are a product (Hendrickse & Thomson, 2005), music educationalists have often described and treated music as a discrete entity. Within the discipline of music the conditions for

border-crossings by music practitioners and scholars in the field of ethnomusicology have been gradually extended over the last half century (Shehan Campbell, 2003) providing a wider and deeper understanding of the plurality of musical cultures around the globe. Swanwick (1988, p. 101) described musical meaning as 'sufficiently abstract to "travel" across cultural boundaries, to step out of its own time and place'. Kwami, Akrofi, and Adams (2003) argued for interculturalism in music education, stating that "interculturalism favours mixing whilst multiculturalism suggests cultural divisiveness" (p. 271). Both Walser (2000) and O'Flynn (2005) define interculturalism that is closely aligned to Schippers' (2005) definition of transculturalism. Walser refers to a form of cultural dialogue that is close to the ideals of the collaboration outlined in this article:

> a form of multiculturalism that encourages dialogue among cultures… negotiated   intercultural space- a site for discussion created by various cultures in consultation…interculturalism adds what might be called a metaculture created co- operatively through the efforts of the co-existing groups… all parties are asked to work towards a new ideal… a cultural environment in which none of the participants   can claim a home field advantage (p. 32).

Teaching and learning authentic songs during a course of music education for more than mere "broadening repertoire and introducing students to a variety of musical traditions"(O'Flynn, 2005, p. 196), needs to take place "to encourage pre-service teachers to take a more active and personal approach to understanding and teaching music of an unfamiliar culture represented within a pluralist Australian society" (Marsh, 2005, p. 39). We need to focus on the dynamic interchange between and among musicians, teachers, learners and various musical-social groups in our own and in other cultures. Key to this focus is "an understanding of how music comes to be practiced, thought about, taught and learned in our own and in other cultures" (O'Flynn, 2005, p. 196). However, we are cautioned that there are as many different ways of how music education can take place as there are different cultures i.e. the societal role of music education differs between cultures. From the many divergent thoughts, models and frameworks [see Drummond (2005), Elliott (1989) 1995, Schippers (2005) and Williams (1972)] reflecting the growing respect for intercultural music-making programmes, it is certain that issues of cultural diversity are ever present and obligatory. Cultural diversity has become a part of contemporary general education and a regular component of music education as a

creative momentum to personal development for lifelong learning. Drummond (2005) proposed that both teachers and pupils should come to see cultural diversity as a creative momentum to their own development throughout their lives, influencing the relationships they forge, the professional and personal judgements they make and the social transactions they negotiate.

The research project methodology and method

As an exploratory pilot project involving the collection of qualitative data, and with the principal researcher as participant, an action research design of collaborative inquiry was deemed to be appropriate. The major idea of collaborative inquiry is to "research 'with' rather than 'on' people" (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000, p. 7). It emphasizes that all active participants are fully involved in research decisions as co-researchers. Collaborative inquiry creates a research cycle among four different types of knowledge: propositional knowing (as in contemporary science), practical knowing (the knowledge that comes with actually doing what you propose), experiential knowing (the feedback we get in real time about our interaction with the larger world) and presentational knowing (the artistic rehearsal process through which we craft new practices). The research process followed the conventions of: forming a collaborative inquiry group, creating the conditions for group learning, acting on the inquiry question and making meaning by constructing knowledge.

The project was undertaken within the confines of a Music Education elective subject as part of a Bachelor of Education (Primary) program at Charles Sturt University and within a Music Education subject as part of a Bachelor of Art in Music and Society at the North West University. Twelve students and one lecturer participated from the CSU site, and six students and one lecturer from the NW site, providing a total of 19 co-researchers. The student interactions, attitudes and behaviours were observed over the duration of one semester in 2008. The subsequent musical-artefacts were collected as data for analysis. The project was designed for a three-stage implementation. The first stage focussed on the establishment of communication between the two student groups and the sensitisation of students to the tonal systems of the different cultures. The second stage of implementation concentrated on the students preparing musical artefact materials for export and stage three

involved the presentation/performance of the musical artefacts. Further elaboration of each stage in relation to the project follows.

Stage 1:Forming a collaborative inquiry group and creating the conditions for group learning

During this early stage of the project the initiators (lecturers) played an organizing role (Bray, et al., 2000). The first task organized for the students was to introduce themselves to the respective cohorts at the research sites. Initially it was envisaged during the planning of the project that the on-line teaching environment offered by the University in Australia would support communication between the two groups. However the environment was unable to support non-enrolled student access. To overcome this, the lecturers at each site acted as a gateway for communication. Students were encouraged to prepare video introductions to facilitate 'real' introductions. It became rapidly apparent that this gateway process was limiting the initiation of communication and so the students offered private email addresses to which communication could be directed and responded. This removed the lecturer mediation and allowed for open, immediate access between students. Consequently the transition for the lecturer from initiator to co-inquirer to collective leadership began providing momentum and access to acquiring intercultural musical knowledge.

As the *Orff-Tswana* project initiated dialogue and interaction through the intercultural music exchange between African and Western students, acquiring musical knowledge, and the sensitization to another culture, needed to be guided by various factors conventional to the society. In traditional African societies acquiring knowledge is based in oral tradition (inter-relationship with the universe), the 'process of enculturation' (observation of/participation in behaviors) and considered a 'lifetime occupation'. Knowledge is acquired through exposure to a variety of situations. Martin and Nakayama (2007) identify three basic objectives in traditional African education:

1. Each person is fully active and participating in society
2. Development of intellect is second place to development of intuition thus an extension of society

3. Oral traditions were the means through which the objectives and principles are achieved (p. 60).

'Enculturation' or immersion in the music and musical practices of one's environment, is regarded by Green (2008, p. 5) as "a fundamental factor that is common to all aspects of music learning, whether formal or informal". However, enculturation plays a more foremost function in some learning practices and with relation to styles of music than others. Green continues to document that most "folk and traditional musics of the world are learnt by enculturation and extended immersion in listening to, watching and imitating the music and music-making practices of the surrounding community (2008, p. 6). She alludes to systems of 'apprenticeship training', 'community of expertise, and 'master-apprentice'. Some crucial differences between how folk and traditional music are passed on, and how Western popular music are passed on are highlighted by Green (2008, p. 6). These include:

- most young popular musicians in Western musical cultures are not regularly surrounded by an adult community of expertise of musicians who they can talk to, listen to, watch and imitate which results in solitary learning
- tendency to establish a community of peers rather than master-musicians to further apprenticeship training.

In the Western classical system in music the notion that individuals play/perform music to satisfy others but not themselves is demonstrated. Many learn to play an instrument in order to learn to play songs. However there is often a loss of joy as students are made to endure a curriculum focusing just on the traditional musical language. Learning these songs often takes place "by observation, concentrated attention, the development of musical memory by practicing until the ability to feel every variation in of the rhythm becomes something almost in the blood and bones of the learner; and by listening until the ability to hear is developed to an extraordinary extent" (Dargie, 1996, p. 35). He argues "that our Western musical attitudes often create barriers between people and the music we consider to be of the greatest value" (1996, p. 31).

The Orff-Schulwerk was identified as a Western music pedagogical concept that aims to stimulate music making through a process that provides participants a great

deal of creative freedom, play and improvisation thus bridging barriers. The process often incorporates the performing arts, or sculptural design, leading to a holistic process of creation. Similarly, as Nzewi (2003, p. 13) reminds us, in African cultures the performance arts disciplines of music, dance, drama, and poetry and costume art are seldom separated in creative thinking and performance practice, and the term "musical arts" should be adopted when acquiring knowledge of the musical arts in traditional society. Hence, the parallelism between African music education and Orff-Schulwerk was further explored by the students through a review of literature followed by brief presentations of findings. Each student was expected to provide a one-page summary of the presentation and upload it to the on-line learning environment for distribution and reference. Students were able to ask questions to the custodians of the respective cultures for understanding, collaboration and action. Sharing this information provided an opportunity for reflection, question and action which contributed to the development of the inquiry question: How can intercultural music-making traditions be shared and experienced trans-nationally?

Stage 2: Acting on the inquiry question

It was apparent to the co-researchers that one of the complexities associated with this project was the 'appropriation' of intercultural music artefacts. To reflect further upon the understanding of the term appropriation, the work of Chapman (2006) was consulted. His work led to the development of the cultural location parameter that makes the distinction between the terms 'borrowing', 'hybridization' and 'syncretism' under the global term 'appropriation'. Chapman proffers the following definition: "appropriation is the use of some element of music by some person or culture for whom it is not historically connected" (2006, p. 3). The nature of appropriation is such that while the act is neutral, some might even say inevitable and desirable, context confers various and contested judgments on each case. Appropriation itself is not the issue. The concern is with the loss of rights of those from whom the music is borrowed when power, prestige and large sums of money become involved propelled by the commoditisation of the music. Ideally, according to Keil and Steven (1994), music should not be a commodity:

> *Once you have come to the conclusion that music is in its very
> essence communal, spiritual, and opposite of private property,*

and its best a totally shared experience, like love, a number of strong and clear positions on the 'music industry' can be stated: there shouldn't be a music industry. Music shouldn't be written or mechanically reproduced and mass-mediated. Music should exist live, for the moment, in present time and as makers should be rewarded with happiness and barter-like reciprocation (p. 228).

The cultural issues debate requires no more than a broad term to describe the use of musical elements across culture. The musical practice, detail, processes and methods of appropriation are irrelevant to the debate as it is the use of the end product in the market place that feeds cultural and moral dilemma. The Orff-*Tswana* project maintained focal attention to how intercultural music making traditions can be shared and experienced trans-nationally, supporting the on-going goal of social transformation in South Africa and supporting internationalisation within music education curricular.

Students from NW were given the task to prepare a musical artefact that would convey, confirm and explore their culture of birth -*Tswana*[1]- for 'export'. The preparation involved fieldwork, documentation and transcription of traditional *Tswana* songs that necessitated the student making contact with *Tswana* cultural custodians and in many instances learning a traditional song. As in most parts of South Africa, *Tswana* communities have experienced tremendous growth in population, school education, urbanization and development in recent times. The changes transpire in the *Tswana* fast becoming a modern secular society and younger generations not accumulating cultural traditions. The Orff-*Tswana* project contributes to the *Tswana* student reconnecting with their culture of origin. To promulgate cultural confirmation the students were required to digitally capture themselves performing the traditional song and transcribe the song using *Sibelius*[2] for export. Advancement in technology proposed to facilitate the export through video, on-line chat room and web-cam

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[1] The Tswana people of South Africa, also known as Batswana or Bechuana (dialectical variants) people, have their origin traced to the Northern part of South Africa, in the present day Botswana (Breutz, 1989) where they share similarities in cultural practices till now. According to Schapera (1965, p. 26), "the ancestors of the modern Tswana are generally believed to have entered South Africa from the north, and to have settled, say about A.D. 1500, in the south-western potion of what is now the Transvaal" (at present, Gauteng and Northern Province).

[2] Sibelius is a score writer program, created by Sibelius Software for Microsoft Windows, Mac OS, and RISC OS.

communication enabling "art educators to traverse cultural and economic boundaries" (Stokrocki, 2007, p. 1369). While technology accommodates the conveyance of originality, authenticity and context assisting the geographical and social border crossing the exporters are not remotely detached from the musical artefact but are connected using digital technologies. The connection allows the 'importers', in this instance Australia, access to the musical artefacts through repeated, close and careful encounters. These encounters involved the repeated viewing of the video performances to learn the melody, the pronunciation of the *Tswana* language, and the accompanying dance movements. The encounters also provided the opportunity to ask questions directly to the exporters. The discussions that followed ensured clarity for the importers to make meaning of the authenticity and context of the song. Providing 'windows of access' maintains a live existence, in present time, for both exporters and importers. Following these 'windows of access', the students in Australia were then assigned to arrange and create a performance for digital capture of the musical artefact using Orff melodic and non-melodic instruments. These performances were then shared with the students in South Africa. 'Windows of access' again provided for the students interact with the material and the producers of the material. This created the opportunity for 'barter-like reciprocation' to take place and a 'hybrid' form of intercultural music exchange was achieved through the ongoing blending of cultures.

Stage 3: Making meaning by constructing knowledge

The purpose of collaborative inquiry is the generation of valid new knowledge and meaning that emerges out of an authentic process of collaboration and inquiry, through cycles of action and reflection (Bray, et al., 2000). The intercultural music exchange resulted in a collaborative and participatory music-making initiative but how did it contribute to the generation of making meaning by constructing knowledge?

A striking manifestation of this project was how the acquisition of knowledge was maintained in the oral/aural tradition in accordance with traditional African societies. The six exchanged transcriptions were noted to be different both in key signature and note value notation from the performance exchanged. A closer examination of the musical artefact transcriptions provided by the South African (see **Excerpt 1** as an example) students observed that the transcriptions were all notated in the musical

key of C major, however the supporting recording was not performed in this key signature. A plausible explanation is attributed to the opening window in *Sibelius* automatically providing for the transcription to be in C major unless the manual selection of another key is made.

Excerpt 1   Transcription of Traditional Tswana

The Australian student's arranged the material according to how it had been transcribed by the South African students, yet when they performed it, it was musically representative of the South African student's performance and not the transcription. In other words, there was a disjunction between the written text and the oral performance. It appears that the written text could have been undertaken to satisfy requirements of the subject and not for the intent purpose of capturing the context of tradition. It is suggested that while we are able to capture and recreate through the exchange of transcription (written text), to create an authentic and accurate performance one benefits from access to the 'real time' live performance or to a suitable digital facsimile to facilitate oral and aural copying. Green (2001, p. 8) brings to attention a number of factors which are not readily communicated through notation, but are captured in aural copying, these include "idiosyncratic and non-standardized timbres, rhythmic flexibility, pitch inflection and many other aspects, not least those never-to-be-defined". The repeated close encounters of aural copying together with the possible unconscious enculturation are essential parts of the learning process, not only in the transmission and reproduction of popular music (Green, 2008) but fundamental to realising intercultural music exchange.

In the field of world music the concept of musical score needs to encompass more than the written text. The musical score needs to be conceptualised as a technology enhanced multi-modal collection. Such a concept would provide windows of access for a wider and deeper understanding in world music. Music would then exist live, for the moment, in present time and the makers could be rewarded with happiness and barter-like reciprocation.

The Australian students confirmed during reflection on the action that the opportunity to hear, see and explore the music of another culture collaboratively affords the original custodians of the musical artefact to collectively participate in transferring authenticity and the context of tradition in performance. Learning the music of another culture by sharing music-making traditions collectively involved the acquisition to varying degrees knowledge and understanding of musical technicalities and theory. While this might have appeared haphazard, over the duration of the semester an understanding emerged that would have been difficult to reproduce in a formal learning environment.

Excerpt 2   Transcription of hybrid form of music exchange

The *Orff-Tswana* project allowed disparate student cohorts the opportunity to collaborative research 'with' and not 'on' another cultural group. While the technology did not support synchronous intercultural music-making traditions, the technology did support asynchronous engagement that led to intercultural music-making performances. The project has illustrated how technology can support sharing and experiencing intercultural music-making traditions trans-nationally to secure the transference of originality, context and authenticity.

All students (South African and Australian) involved became highly motivated to appreciate the implications of cultural diversity through the experience of collaborative and collective inquiry. The extension of the traditional classroom provided windows of access and opportunity for intercultural exchange. While this project focussed on intercultural music exchange, during the semester students in Australia gained insight, understanding and access to another cultural grouping and vice a versa. Parallel knowledge production affords student cohorts a sensitisation to and for another cultural grouping that contributes to a negotiated intercultural peer learning in practice space. The peer learning space engages questioning, discussion, and debate between the cultures contributing to a meta-culture created co-operatively through the efforts of the co-existing groups of students.

Implications and applications to teaching and learning of music education

For teachers to effectively facilitate teaching and learning they need to be equipped with adequate knowledge and skills that will result in a positive attitude towards interculturalism and a willingness to persevere until the ideal expertise is attained. This can contribute to and further intercultural music exchange through 'publishing the score'. The concept of score needs to encompass more than the written text. It should rather be seen as a technology enhanced multi-modal collection.

The global village and advancement of technology have created a highway of opportunity, we need to offer windows of access and publish the score. However, at a time when higher education institutions are competitively driving blended learning opportunities, it is apparent that not all institutions have the digital capacity to support such blended initiatives. Institutions must take cognisance of the divide between policy for the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning environments and

the reality of implementation. If emerging digital technologies cannot be supported by an institution there is little that can be done to keep abreast with the 'competition', nor in the provision of windows of access.

Sharing cultural diversity in society is a reality of living. The global village that we find ourselves living, teaching, learning and experiencing today is a dynamic society with many opportunities to explore. Often we tend to think that it is 'easier' to remain with the familiar. However, if we remain insular we will isolate ourselves from mainstream society. Music education offers a suitable platform for intercultural music exchange. But, if the exchange remains just between two persons or two parties, the wider community will not hear the score. Research in the field of cultural diversity in music education requires of us all to document and publish the score.
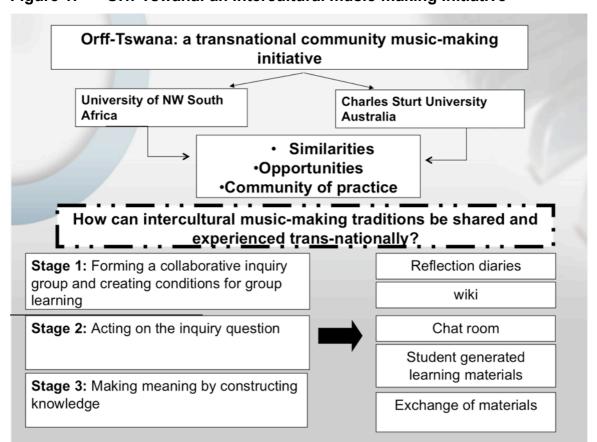
Figure 1: Orff-Tswana: an intercultural music-making initiative

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