Weaving World Musics into Early Childhood Curriculum

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Introduction

Learning and teaching multicultural and world music has been a trend in the field of music education for the past decade, especially in the field of elementary and secondary education. The term "World Music" is more commonly used as a popular or commercial term; it often means popular styles from around the world. In the field of ethnomusicology, world musics "include folk, traditional, classical, art, popular, and neotraditional (Miller and Shahriari, p. 15)." As for the term of "multi-cultural", it is coined by and used by music educators. Multi-cultural music includes an eclectic mixture of musics representing different ethnic groups in the curriculum, presenting a celebration of ethnic diversity. In this article, the focus of the "world musics" is folk, traditional and popular musics from different ethnic groups.

While introducing world musics to children is essential, when is the best age to start? Some educators believe children should be familiar with their mother tongue songs before singing in a foreign language. Thus, is it appropriate to introduce world musics to young children, especially songs that are sung in other languages? Who holds the responsibility for teaching multicultural music to young children? What kind of materials are appropriate for young children? And, what are the strategies for the collection of these materials?

The Concept of Multicultural Music

Since early civilization, music has been found to be an identity of humankind. Music has functioned as a significant component of religious and social celebrations, rituals, and ceremonies. In "A Philosophy of Music Education" (1989), Reimer mentioned that music is considered to be the most powerful way to explore and experience the specificity of how life and culture are felt by various groups that share communal identities. If music is closely related to culture, then what is culture? "Culture is generated by the interplay between a group's beliefs about its physical and social circumstances, and the forms of knowledge it develops and preserves to meet its needs" (Elliot, p. 185, 1995). Elliot concluded that culture is not what people have, rather, it is what people create.

Due to growing social awareness, the world is shrinking, making the different continents less isolated from each other. Some people have said that since music is not verbal like language, it transcends national, cultural, and social boundaries in its ability to communicate. If so, is music an international language?

Musically speaking, when a folk or traditional piece of music from a culture other than our own stimulates our senses as we are listening to it, our perceptions will interpret the piece by using our social/cultural backgrounds. Between the processes of sensation and perception exists the interpretation state, also known as the filter process. An illustration of the processes of sensation, filtering and perception, as defined by Broadbent (1988) is drawn below:

According to Gestalt principles, the mind selects and organizes discrete stimuli into figures and groupings which appear to obey certain general laws. Sensation and perception are integral processes within Gestalt theory. Sensation refers to the detection of sensory stimulation, whereas perception is the interpretation of what is sensed (Shaffer, 1993). The environment influences perceptual development in many ways. Specifically, our social and cultural environments influence our auditory perceptions, our interpretations of artwork, and our judgments about the physical characteristics of objects.

Traditionally, one way music listeners seem to recognize musical expressions of emotion is by learning to associate, by convention, certain features of musical patterns (*e.g.*, melodic contour or rhythmic pattern; tonality: major is happy, minor is sad; tempo; timbre; and dynamics) with specific emotions. For example, many people have the impression that minor tonality is about sadness. This is a

culturally biased statement. In Islamic music, harmonic minor and *Hijaz* are common "minor" scales. Among the Uyghur Muslims in north-west China, the term *muqam* does not imply mode. Although the term *muqam* designates a certain set of pitches, it is more associated with "mood, smell or style (*piraq*), pitch, tone of voice, person, time or place. The term *muqam* has moral power, as in the saying *uning muqami yoq* (he has no muqam, *i.e.*, he is unreasonable)." (Harris, 2002, para. 30)

If music were an international language, then we would all share the same filter process, perceive the piece of music in the same way, and experience the same emotional reaction. Do we? The answer is no. The way we perceive and filter is not necessarily an inborn, natural process. It has to be nurtured within an open-minded, anti-biased atmosphere. In other words, music education is not something that operates autonomously in a culture; rather, it functions powerfully within various cultures.

Young children are more open-minded, are less biased and are usually open to all kinds of music (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995). When we, including children, listen to a piece of music, we listen to it as a unified whole, which is the emphasis of Gestalt theory. Children who have fewer life experiences mostly perceive music through sensation, without a filtering process. Our responsibility as music educators is not to introduce our children to only one way of perceiving music, but rather various ways; stimulating children's senses when exploring world musics should be emphasized. The world music experience and knowledge that young children gain is reliant on the curriculum that is designed by the teachers. By applying appropriate ways of helping our children learn and understand about others, we are providing them a strong tool to become insiders and eventually become world citizens.

Since teachers play such an important role when introducing multicultural materials to children, it is critical for teachers to know the strategies that can be applied when collecting, analyzing and creating the curriculum. In Trinka's (1995) article, the author outlines problems music teachers encounter when using folk songs in their classrooms. The systematic analysis of rhythmic and melodic patterns, and the singing styles of the teachers do not represent the original expressions of the folksongs. Trinka believes that one of the main problems is that music educators do not learn the songs through the processes of oral/aural traditions, nor do they understand the cultural contexts and function of the music. Therefore, they do not experience interpretations that represent the authentic integrity of the music.

If we play such a significant role in guiding children to build an anti-biased attitude towards multicultural music, how should we first prepare ourselves? Since culture relies heavily on a group's beliefs, when we learn about multicultural music, we need to learn the cultural background, beliefs, and social development of the musical examples. The learning method involves more than the processes of studying and analyzing. If learning music from another culture is too involved in intellectual thinking and the aesthetic feeling of the music is ignored, then one may not be able to accept the music of the other culture with an open mind. If one culture analyzes the music of another culture by using his or her own values, the real meaning of the music may be missed. According to Russell (Meyer, 1961, p. 61), "Understanding music is not a matter of dictionary definitions, of knowing this, that, or the other rule of musical syntax and grammar; rather, it is a matter of habits correctly acquired in one's self and properly presumed in the particular work." The appreciation of music for many listeners is based on the match between individual cultural-ideological beliefs or insight and the cognition of the musical expressions of these values. These beliefs or values are based on the emotions associated with the particular culture (Elliot, 1995). This explains how the process of understanding a piece of music is essentially a matter of transferring the emotions associated with particular circumstances and occasions to pieces and passages of music heard.

For example, there are many hidden meanings in African-American's spirituals. In 17th and 18th centuries drums, a communication tool, were banned and slaves used songs to express their feelings. While trying to avoid getting themselves into trouble, they sang songs with hidden meanings, expressing their anger, frustration, and even hopelessness. *Wade in the Water* is a song about escaping from their masters and hunting dogs by wading in the water. Slaves studied Old Testament in their churches, and thus related themselves to "the Children of Israelites," hoping God would give them strength and hope, just as Moses led the Jews across the Red Sea to Jordon. *Swing Low*, based on Old Testament text, was sung by slaves to express their hopes of finding life after death. We should not overlook the hidden meanings that described those hundred years of struggle. We can use this music to teach children about past and assert the present social justice in our society.

Using religious music in the classroom can be problematic. Many Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Hawaiians and other natives will feel offended if children are asked to sing religious, sacred songs and chants. For each religion, there are particular ways the followers relate them-

selves to the religion, and this involves human feelings. Since human feelings are expressed uniquely by each culture, and human beings are both universally alike and culturally different, when we introduce music that is outside the mainstream, we need to "scan" the lyrics very carefully. For example, in Hawaii, hulas are divided into hula *auana* (secular) and hula *kahiko* (sacred). Hula *auana* is normally accompanied with 'ukulele, guitar and bass. As for *hula kahiko,* instruments that accompanied the dance are made from natural resources; for example, gourd – *ipu,* bamboo sticks – *pu'ili,* stones – *'ili 'ili,* gourds filled with small shells or seeds – *'uli 'uli.* In ancient Hawaii, life and religion were inseparable. *Hula kahiko,* sacred dance and chant, was used to praise *Laka,* the goddess of *hula*; and *Pele*, the goddess of the volcano. In the ancient time, there were certain taboos in relation to chanting, and *hula kahiko* was under the supervision of *kahuna*, the priest, who was inspired by the gods. Today, hula dancers portray the ancient style of *hula kahiko* with reservation, practicing in the ancient religion, thus it is inappropriate to teach hula *kahiko* in the classroom.

We, as educators, should take very seriously the responsibility of sharing world music in such a way that our children will understand and respect the culture from which it has come. When we collect materials for young children, we need to know our sources, making sure the information that we gather is accurate and insightful. Collecting materials can be challenging. Below are different strategies teachers can use for these collections.

Collecting materials

Teachers can learn and collect music materials first by collecting books and recordings. By reading books, listening to CDs, and watching videos and DVDs, teachers can learn the materials then make applications and modifications for the classrooms. Teachers need to examine the quality of the materials, including the accuracy of the background information, pictures, drawings; authenticity of the music materials, including instruments that are used to accompany the songs; tone colors of the voices that represent the particular culture; and most importantly, the languages that are used to sing the songs. Original meanings of the songs and chants will be lost if lyrics are not translated accurately. Getting materials from a book is the most efficient way but is not sufficient preparation to be able to provide accurate information for the children. Having an authentic aural example is ideal.

The second way of collecting materials is through attending workshops and conferences. Clinicians have taken the time to find repertoire that will be enchanting and accessible for children. Attending sessions that are conducted by clinicians who are from a given culture will give teachers even greater insights. Since there is often only time for clinicians to teach repertoire in a workshop or conference session, teachers need to be prepared to study cultural background on their own.

The third way teachers can gather materials is to conduct ethnographic research in their own school district. First, teachers need to determine the culture of people they intend to study. Teachers, as the researchers, can conduct in-depth interviews with family members of their students when collecting the materials (Patton, 1990). The next step is to contact families of students who are a member of the chosen culture. This is always a challenging step, because families, especially minorities, do not always feel comfortable sharing information about their cultures. To bridge this problem, teachers can start by inviting a family member to participate in the reading of a book from their culture. Children and families normally feel more comfortable and excited when they see their cultures are being valued. They will then be more willing to participate and provide more materials to the teacher.

After collecting early childhood materials from different cultures, teachers can analyze the materials and categorize them into different groups. For example, from the Anglo-American tradition, early childhood repertoire can be divided into bounces, finger plays, tickles, wiggles, tapping and clapping, simple circles, singing games, simple songs (Feierabend, 1997). But repertoire from other cultures may be categorized differently. For example, in Chinese children's repertoire, there are fewer bounces, but more finger plays and singing games. In addition, music teachers should look to find the common tonalities, forms, meters, and tone colors within one culture.

Creating the curriculum

There are three strategies that teachers can use when creating the curriculum. First, teachers should start the teaching of multicultural music that represents the background of the majority children in the community (Loong, 2007). The main content of the curriculum should reflect the main culture of the children. We should teach children about their own musical heritage first, then slowly broaden their musical horizons.

Since the formation of nuclear families after WWII, many grandchildren lost direct interaction with grandparents, thus many folk materials that had been passed down through oral tradition were forgotten (Feierabend, 1997; Loong, 2007). We, as educators, should not take it for granted that children in our classrooms know musical materials from their cultures.

After children are familiar with their own cultures, teachers can then start to introduce other cultures. Attempting to introduce too many cultures, mixing different musics, changing culture to a different genre each week, will confuse children (Loong, 2007). Quality teaching is more important than quantity, especially when teaching cultures. We need to give the children more time to experience and explore before moving to the next culture. Covering a culture in 3-4 weeks is the most ideal.

Teachers should then carefully select high quality, authentic materials. Authenticity of music can evolve through time. Many people have the impression that authentic music is music that doesn't change and evolve. In Hawaii, hula competitions are held at various locations every year. Before the competitions, *kumus* (hula teachers) will be provided with the words of the *meles* (chants), and they are asked to create the movements and melodies to go with the *meles*. These melodies are newly composed, yet still maintain the appropriate tone colors and tonal patterns reflecting the Hawaiian cultures. Since hulas are about telling stories, an excellent ensemble is an ensemble that can sing with correct rhythmic accents and choreograph the meanings of the words gracefully. Hawaiian language and music are closely related and they are passed down through oral tradition, with no notation being written; thus there are many variations when singing and performing the same chant. *Kumus,* who have rich experience with tradition, are the ones who have the expertise needed to improvise and compose this music.

On the other hand, the melody of *Frere Jacques* is commonly sung in China. The song was translated into "Two Little Tigers: Two little tigers, run very fast, one doesn't have an eye, one doesn't have a tail, very very strange." In China this is considered as a "common folk song" among young children, and many educators have no idea the song originated from France before WWII, when students who studied in France brought back the melody and added "new" words to *Frere Jacques.* Of course, there is no relationship between Brother John and the tigers. Should we take the song away from the Chinese children because it is not authentic? Or, should we inform and tell the children in China about the origins of the song? How should we face this situation and still yet provide authentic and quality materials for our children? These are questions that we need to answer.

When authentic, quality materials have been found, teachers should choose those materials that also include movement. Children learn through their bodies and their minds. Separating the two will inhibit their learning. In many cultures, movements are used to enhance the understanding of the repertoire, making the music and the movements inseparable.

Finally, create diversity within the curriculum by including different tonalities and meters. Major scales and simple meters are the most common elements in western tradition. There are arguments about including different modes in the curriculum, for example, Dorian and Mixolydian. But these modes are based on Western tradition. In order to avoid bias towards non-western cultures, should we expose our children to eastern tonalities? For example, *ragas* and *maqam*? Children will have a less biased attitude if they are exposed to ALL KINDS of music at a young age. By carefully planning the curriculum, we will be helping students perceive and categorize music according to their own holistic experiences and intuitive feelings.

Creating lesson plans

After creating a curriculum that is based on many different cultures, teachers need to construct the lessons for young children. Below are some suggestions for developing activities in classroom settings.

Classroom activities are basically divided into three formats: sitting, non-locomotor and locomotor activities. Sitting activities include vocal exploration—activities that encourage children to explore different voices; call and response—activities that encourage children to sing individually; songs and chants—activities that involve hand and body movements (bounces, finger plays, wiggles, tickles all are under this category); listening activities—children listening to a piece of recorded music, or teacher singing and telling a story. The lesson can begin with children sitting in a circle, followed by non-locomotor, locomotor activities and finally a mixture of the two.

Young children learn best if periods of concentration are short, frequent, and intense, and are followed by periods of relaxation and play. It is common to start the class with sitting activities because children can concentrate the best during the first 10 minutes. Sitting in a circle is always encouraged in the music classroom because the children can see each other and communicate with each other with movements or singing. In addition, each child has an open space in front of him or her for movement activities.

Teachers can start with vocal exploration, call and response to warm-up children's voices, then continue with songs and chants that involve movement while sitting. For example, *Hush! A Thai Lullaby* by Ho (1996) is a book that helps children to explore different ways animals make sounds in Thailand. As for African American culture, singing *Shoo*

Turkey, *Mama Don't Allow*, and *Charlie Over the Ocean* are good ways to encourage children to sing individually in the classroom. The other sitting activities include finger plays, wiggles, tickles, bounces, taps and claps. For Latino culture, examples are *A, el burro se va* - finger play (Montoya-Stier, 2008, p. 3); *Una viejita* – tickle (Montoya-Stier, 2008, p. 7) and *Bate-bate* (taps and claps) (Loong, 2008, para. 1, 2 and 3).

A non-locomotor activity is normally a transitional activity from sitting to standing. After sitting on the floor for quite some time, children are ready to move. These kinds of activities will help the children change their position from sitting to standing. A Ghanaian call and response, *Che Che Koolay* is one example of a non-locomotor transitional activity.

Locomotor movement activities include simple ones that involve the children moving in the formation of circle. The concept of a circle is, however, an abstraction for the preschool-age child, so specific techniques need to be employed when forming a circle with young children. For the African American culture, one example is *Uncle Jessie*. Teachers can also include creative movement that is generated by stories (Loong, 2007). For example, teachers can use a Chinese story, *The Greatest Treasure* by Demi (1998), and ask to discover different ways to choreograph the characters in the story by moving in rhythmic and expressive ways.

During the second half the lesson, it is always easier to catch children's attention by doing a mixture of activities. This includes singing games, instrument exploration, and recorded music activities.

Singing games are activities that involve children in playing games while singing. Singing games can also help children to learn turn-taking, role-playing and socializing with other children. This is particularly critical for a child's social development. In Chinese culture, some of the examples are *One corner two corners, Eat the peach, Zhao Peng You,* and *Lan Po Po* (Loong, 2008, para.2, 5, 6 and 9).

Children should be encouraged to create music spontaneously by using found sounds materials, such as musical and non-musical instruments. Materials that are commonly found around any house can be used to make music. This includes pans, wooden objects, and plastic bottles (Loong, 2007). In addition, when telling stories that are based on specific cultures, teachers can

introduce ethnic instruments to the children. Children can use these instruments to create sound compositions (make the sound of thunder, raindrops, wind, and so on) to accompany a story. A Latino story book, *Musicians of the Sun* by McDermott (2000) is a good example for creating sounds when reading the story. Another example is an African story, *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* by Aardema (1976). This exploration will provide a foundation for the development of structured music ideas and concepts that will be taught later (Lineburgh and Loong, 2006).

Choosing quality recordings and developing artistic movement routines for world musics is critical to young children. Teachers need to keep the examples to approximately two to three minutes in length, and try to adapt and edit the music and movements when necessary. For African American cultures, children can dance and move when listening to *Wang Wang Blues* by Benny Goodman and *Maple Leaf Rag* by Scott Joplin. Children can also listen to *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong and read the book of the song by Weiss (1995) (Lineburgh and Loong, 2006).

Educational psychologists believe our sensory registers can only hold information for a brief period of time and are highly limited. The amount of information we remember is dependent on the length of exposure and the amount of information we are receiving. Thus, our short-term memory has limited capacity. Knowing this is important for teaching because we can only get the attention of the young children for a short time. It is important that in a music lesson, a variety of song materials be used. Children should be exposed to songs that they can sing as well as songs that call for specific responses. If the activity involves emotion, feeling, experience, repetition, this will make the children encode information and transform it into long-term memory. If the activities involve movements from dancing to sitting, moving to playing games, this will ensure a balance between concentration and relaxation.

Variety and repetition in lessons are best managed through repeating a song several times in one lesson, singing many different songs in one lesson, and repeating a song many times over several lessons. More than 50% of the songs should be repeated from session to session, especially for children under the age of 3. When teaching a new song or chant, it should be repeated at least three to four times (Feierabend, 2006). The children should be encouraged to sing or chant the new piece in lessons that follow. When a finger play, movement, or singing game is introduced, the teacher should begin by singing the song and doing the movements for the children. Children will normally pick up the motions, then put in the important words, then combine the motions and key words. Eventually all the words will be learned and combined with the motions, and then a complete song will be produced. Children can normally pick up activities by watching the model in the classroom.

Conclusion

Teaching multi-cultural and world musics is more than teaching "music" to our children, as music educators need to gain an appreciation of aesthetics as we learn about the music itself. We need to start from an historical perspective. We need to know the existing beliefs and social developments that surrounded the birthing of each musical example we choose. Analysis of various musics themselves is not the main aim. By having an in-depth understanding of the music ourselves, we will be able to teach students to learn, sing, play music and gain greater insight into the music of our own culture as well as other cultures.

Once students have studied their culture's music from this integrative approach, they will be better prepared to learn, understand, and appreciate music from another's culture as well as the culture itself. As music educators we have an important role as carriers of culture. We must present materials to our students through an anti-biased filter and advocate what Derman-Sparks has said: "Differences are good; oppressive ideas and behaviors are not." (p. x)

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