Teaching World Music in the Netherlands 1983-2003. A cross-cultural investigation into concepts, ideas and practices of music transmission in culturally diverse environments
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Chapter Three – RECONTEXTUALISATION

– The Dynamics of Tradition, Authenticity and Context

Introduction

Having established a number of basic parameters by considering the terminology and relevant publications from ethnomusicology and music education, some of the concepts that influence the ideas about world music education and its practice can now be examined. As this study deals largely with the “study of music education outside its culture of origin,” it is relevant to consider various views on tradition, authenticity and context, both from the perspective of Western classical music, which has been quite influential in defining the territory in the literature, and of the practices in various forms of popular and world music, the advent of which has challenged existing interpretations and inspired new ones.

The study of these concepts and their interrelationship covers a vast area, with publications and articles across various disciplines. In this chapter, the discussion will be limited to a select number of approaches significant for this study. In paragraphs dedicated to each of the key concepts, we will examine how scholars and practitioners translate the concepts of tradition, authenticity and context into musical and educational practice, either conforming to conventional interpretations, or working with more recent approaches such as living traditions, strategic inauthenticity, and recontextualisation.

Tradition

*OED Online* defines tradition as “the action of handing over to another; delivery, esp. oral delivery, of information or instruction” and, perhaps most relevantly, “the act of handing down … from generation to generation … by word of mouth or by practice without writing.” The concept of tradition is limited to oral and defined fairly statically here. In his philosophical dictionary, Willemsen includes in the concept “everything that has been man-made and – from one generation to the next – has been passed from the past to the present, irrespective of its reception being appreciated or not. Consequently, tradition is an essential dynamic reality.” He also refers to a “more trivial” meaning of tradition: “when it refers to the stagnation of morals, customs or habits, to which people resort who do not wish to accept progress.” He dismisses this widespread meaning of the word as “inauthentic” (Willemsen, 1992). This tension between static and dynamic perceptions of tradition merits further investigation.
In order to differentiate between the two, the sociologist Hobsbawm distinguishes *custom* from *tradition*. He argues that the former “in traditional societies has the double function of motor and fly-wheel”; it does allow innovation and change up to a point, although this is limited because: “it must appear compatible or even identical with precedent,” to give desired change the “sanction of precedent.” About tradition, however, he states that its “object and characteristic … is invariance” (Hobsbawm, 1983, 3), which links it to the “inauthentic” meaning of Willemsen, and represents an unequivocally static interpretation of the concept.

This approach to tradition is largely in line with the approaches and subject-matter of early ethnomusicology, which “concerned itself with the musics of non-literate peoples; the orally transmitted music of cultures then perceived to be ‘high’ such as the traditional court and urban musics of China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, India, Iran and other Arabic-speaking [sic] countries; and ‘folk music,’ which Nettl (1964) tentatively defined as the music in oral tradition found in those areas dominated by high cultures” (Bohlmann, 2003). In each of these, aspects of continuity rather than change tended to be highlighted. The importance of the concept of tradition to ethnomusicology is illustrated by the re-naming of the International Folk Music Council to International Council for Traditional Music in 1981. Much research from this period emphasises the continuity of tradition, rather than its ability to change. In other words, whether referring to oral or written tradition, tradition seems to have been regarded as a quite static phenomenon in most Western contexts until recently.

The same can be said to apply the ‘great tradition’ of Western classical music. Here, the ‘tradition’ is often conceived as synonymous with the body of great works from the famous composers who worked during a 200-year period starting in the early decades of the eighteenth century. In “Rethinking Musical Culture: Canonic Reformulations in a Post-Tonal Age,” the musicologist Morgan points out that this *canon* is both “a body of exemplary works drawn from the past and a law, or rule of conduct, for musical construction,” which he argues are “in fact inseparably joined. For an essential function of the canonic repertoire is to provide models … for compositional practice. The canonic work is thus both a model for creation and a standard against which creation is measured” (1992, p. 44). Although this view does not necessarily imply stasis, it does narrow the scope for innovation.

This view is in fact corroborated by Cook, who considers the canon a major obstacle in looking at music from a wider perspective. He argues that from the time of Beethoven, the *musical museum* came into existence, which “provided the conceptual framework within which music took its place in the cultural heritage” (1998, p. 30), the repertory or canon:

The term “classical music” came into common currency. Borrowed from the “classical” art of Greece and Rome, which was seen as the expression of universal standards of beauty, this term implied that similar standards had now been set in music, against which the production of all other times and places must be measured. (Cook, 1998, p. 31)
In the sense of model and standard, this Western tradition shares some characteristics with the tradition of North Indian classical music. The latter is not written down, but nevertheless consists of a strict and complex set of rules governing the reproduction, restructuring and generation of melodic and rhythmic patterns. A raga is in fact an abstract ‘Gestalt’ or ‘idea,’ which is translated into audible sound every time it is played. Consequently, notated works are of very little significance. Whilst none have succeeded in defining the exact rules for any raga in detail, most senior musicians will largely agree on what is acceptable in each raga (eg Bor, 1999, pp. 1-2). And although there are broadly respected recordings of particular ragas by famous artists, these would never be considered the central body of works. Consequently, the idea of tradition as canon is foreign to North Indian classical music.

The tradition of Indian classical music as a set of rules governing musical practice has proven quite solid and compares well to that of Western classical music up to the end of the nineteenth century. Morgan speaks of “an essence, dictated by a transcendent power and preserved by an equally transcendent tradition.” But he continues: “Within the dynamic context of Western cultural history, this preservation has had to be tempered by some latitude for change, at times quite extensive. Yet these changes have tended to be defended either as superficial adjustments, beneath which the essential principles persisted, or as necessary corrections of previous digressions that had diverted music from its true course, distorting its essential nature” (1992, p. 45). This is still much like the Indian perspective. Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, in the West it was possible to maintain this canonic “belief in a communal musical language, prevailing underneath a wealth of superficial, time-bound stylistic transformations” (Morgan, 1992, p. 46). This is quite relevant for the discussion in relation to music education, which, as we have seen, still relies heavily on late nineteenth century ideas (Volk, 1998, p. 31).

Meanwhile, in musical practice and composition, the canon has been challenged profoundly by the “post-tonal” revolution of Schoenberg to Cage, whose work “became increasingly less anchored in human memory, in cultural tradition and psychological reality” (Morgan, 1992, p. 53). This in turn opened the way for looking at other cultures in a less biased way, at least for a cultural elite. As Morgan puts it: “It has enabled us to question the hegemony of a relatively small and limited body of music in setting absolute standards of acceptability. And it has enabled us to look anew at neglected repertoires, indeed whole cultures of ‘other’ music, previously relegated to the periphery and tolerated - if at all - as merely exotic seasonings enhancing an undisputed central tradition” (Morgan, 1992, pp. 59-60). In Western music, this has led to a situation where, as Bergeron puts it, “there is not a single canon constantly in view, but rather a continually changing idea of what that canon might be. Indeed, the canon, quite contrary to its nature, becomes an open question” (1992, p. 6). This eminently
postmodern idea is rather more difficult to translate to educational practice than reference to a single, clear canon.

The deconstruction of the canon in Western music opened the way to traditions that are more performance-oriented than text-based (Morgan, 1992, p. 60). This included many oral musical cultures, which are defined by performance. Many of these have an explicit or implicit theory at their base, as we will see in the next chapter, but the exact organisation of tones is not predetermined. In that way, each individual performance becomes the moment of truth: it is then and only then that expressions of traditional concepts or new ideas are accepted or rejected by listeners on the basis of a wide set of criteria, ranging from practical matters such as inspiring people to dance (see Case Study 1), to considerations of whether it fits in the tradition (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 2), to metaphysical factors as its effectiveness in bringing forth trance or calling up spirits of forefathers (Rouget, 1985).

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

In fact, the idea of tradition as a mechanism, the last of five approaches identified in this chapter, addresses one of the crucial concepts causing confusion in the interpretation of the concept of tradition, particularly with reference to cultures other than one’s own. While Western culture has commonly viewed the concept of tradition as a static phenomenon in the way of Hobsbawm and Willemse “inauthentic” meaning, handed down with little change, most non-Western cultures in fact have traditions that constantly change with the demands of the times, in an organic way, or in a conscious effort to retain relevance to their audiences. The mechanism underlying this process, which may be composed of systems of transmission, peer-pressure, and a number of other factors, accounts for the occurrence of what is generally referred to as ‘living traditions.’ Change within certain boundaries is not only allowed, but in fact part of the essence of these traditions.
Ironically, Hobsbawm argues, some of these changing or even new traditions may suggest an antiquity that it cannot claim historically. He speaks of "invented traditions," defining them as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1983, p. 1). The tendencies we have noted before, attributing or suggesting more ancient beginnings to musical pieces, performance styles, instruments or lineages than can be justified, belong in the same category. In Western classical music, the nineteenth-century dress code musicians tend to follow when playing Bach or Mozart is a good example of this: it suggests a time-honoured performance practice, which in fact did not exist at the time of the great composers of the classical period.

According to Hobsbawm, 'invented tradition' can be divided into three overlapping types: "a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimising institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour" (1983, p. 9). All three play a role in musical traditions: in communities of traditional musicians, in organised music education (particularly conservatories), and in learners and audiences of traditional music.

This aspect of tradition also challenges our perspective on history. In musical history across cultures, we can distinguish between various approaches and emphases: there are predominantly chronological approaches to history (traditionally heavily favoured in the West), causal approaches to history (focusing on the mechanisms of change) and mythological/personal approaches to history, in which facts are reshaped to reflect the importance attributed to a particular musician, development or event. In his discussion on oral histories, Vansina states:

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Each culture has its own notions of time, and calendars do not exist in oral society. We cannot date the depth of a tradition in any direct way, we can only date the recording of a performance or of testimony by an informant. How then are we to establish chronology? Chronology is essential to history. History deals with chains of change, this is, not with change as a fact only, but with change as the result of preceding situations leading to later situations, change as a product of causality. [...] Chronology need not be based on an absolute calendar, it can be a relative sequence of events and situations only. But chronology there must be, if there is to be history. I examine in sequence, first, how time is measured in oral societies and therefore expressed in tradition, then, how memory deals with sequence, and, last, which oral sources could be used to establish chronology and how. (Vansina, 1985, pp. 173-174)
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Vansina refers to the concept of inventing traditions in the West: "Aging of events to make them more important is well known to Europeans, for whom time legitimizes and creates importance, so that the usual understanding of anachronisms refers to items 'ascending' through time" (1985, p. 177), and
refers to the subtle balance in the use of sources that must be found by the researcher in order to establish a chronology:

Oral traditions have a part to play in the reconstruction of the past. The importance of this part varies according to place and time. It is a part similar to that played by written sources because both are messages from the past to the present, and messages are key elements in historical reconstruction. But the relationship is not one of the diva and her understudy in the opera: when the star cannot sing the understudy appears; when writing fails tradition comes on stage. This is wrong. Wherever oral traditions are extant they remain an indispensable source for reconstruction. They correct other perspectives just as much as other perspectives correct them. (Vansina, 1985, p. 199)

This is likely to lead to well-considered outcomes. What Vansina does not refer to explicitly, however, is the interpretation of deviations from demonstrable dating or chronology. This ‘mythologisation,’ which is frequently encountered in the stories musicians tell, may be significant in understanding a tradition at a deeper level, as it may illustrate implicitly held values or beliefs.

All in all, the overview above allows us to distinguish five approaches to tradition, with varying degree of dynamism: we can view tradition as a canon or body of works; a standard with an explicit or implicit set of rules; a performance practice; music in culture; and a mechanism of handing down music. For a translation to music education, the professed and practiced adherence to the past of each approach is a key factor. In order to explore this, we will look at three core aspects of musical traditions in some more detail: imitation, restriction and freedom, and stasis and dynamism.

**Imitation**

Closely associated with the concept of tradition is that of imitation. In contemporary Western cultures, imitation is used almost invariably with negative connotations, referring to something that is not real: “made (of cheaper material) in imitation of a real or genuine article” (OED Online). Grove Music Online ignores the concept as an important aspect of tradition: the entry “imitation” only refers to the word as a Western compositional technique. It does devote a paragraph to the related concept of *mimesis*, referring to Plato, who

makes it clear that when he speaks of musical mimesis, he means music's capacity to affect ethos, not the mere imitation of sounds (Laws, ii, 669e–670a; cf the Aristotelian Problems, xix.15) – a common feature of compositions for solo instruments. The best music is that which has the greatest similarity (*homoiotês*) to mimesis of the good and the beautiful (Laws, ii, 668b; cf Republic, iii, 401b–403c). (Mathiesen, 2003)

This meaning of *mimesis* hovers between the abstract and the concrete: “Varying translations of the term illustrate the difficulties of interpretation associated with it. ‘Imitation’ stresses the concept of copying; the preference for ‘representation’ emphasizes instead that of creative involvement. Neither translation conveys the full sense of the concept of mimesis” (Mathiesen, 2003). Grove Music Online
also refers to ‘modelling,’ which it defines as “the use of an existing piece of music as a model or pattern for a new work, in whole or in part. Modelling may involve assuming the existing work's structure, incorporating part of its melodic or rhythmic material, imitating its form or procedures, or following its example in some other way” (Burkholder, 2003). In this interpretation, both *mimesis* and modelling represent advanced stages of imitation, which usually starts with copying.

In the ‘tradition’ of Western classical music (as well as the other arts), the latter form of imitation was standard practice until the middle of the eighteenth century. Grout attributes the genius of Bach to five factors, of which “the laborious but fruitful method of assimilation from all sources by copying scores” is one (1980, p. 416). However, from the romantic period, personal creative genius was stressed over imitation and adherence to established rules. Composers were perceived as great innovators rather than followers of a tradition, with Beethoven as possibly their greatest champion.

This concept as the artist as a rebel rather than a follower has only been challenged incidentally. In his essay “Principles and Criteria of Art,” the Swiss philosopher Schuon, who published extensively on what he considered the essential, primordial and universal qualities of various religions, takes an extreme position towards imitation and its relation to innovation in art, of which he emphasises the ‘sacred’ aspects:

> True genius can develop without making innovations: it attains perfection, depth and power of expression almost imperceptibly by means of the imponderables of truth and beauty ripened in that humility without which there can be no true greatness. From the point of view of sacred art or even that of merely traditional art, to know whether the work is an original, or a copy is a matter of no concern: in a series of copies of a single canonical model one of them, which may be less “original” than some other, is a work of genius through a concatenation of precious conditions which have nothing to do with any affectation of originality or other posturing of the ego. (Schuon, 1959, p. 66)

In many traditions across the world, imitation in one or more of the senses described above is a force to be reckoned with, and acknowledged as a common and central concept in the learning process. Nonetheless, the concept of imitation in the negative sense does exist as well: Indian classical musicians speak of *carbon copies* when they find that a young musician copies an example too closely and without personal expression. However, years of imitation are part of the training of many young musicians in a wide variety of traditions in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In recent decades, this process has been greatly facilitated by the availability of sound recordings, although it has raised apprehensions about the long-term effects of unguided imitation.

Some musical traditions (particularly ones with primarily ritual purposes) seem to hardly value individual expression. However, mere replication is hardly ever the ultimate goal of imitation. In later stages of the process, creativity is generally considered as something that comes naturally to those who

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have mastered the tradition through many years of imitation. In this way, imitation is the mechanism for developing a skill base or model for production of music within the tradition, rather than mere reproduction of existing repertoire and interpretations. In virtually all traditions, the resulting creativity follows the explicit and/or implicit rules of the tradition quite strictly. Only the greatest musicians are allowed to test the boundaries of the rules, as they are the guardians and bearers of the tradition.

In contemporary music learning in informal settings, the use of imitation is probably more widespread than ever across the world, as is witnessed by the thousands of applicants for *Idols*. This televised search for pop stars, which has been broadcast on national television in several western countries since 2002, features contestants who have learned predominantly by copying songs from the radio (*Idols*, 2002). In a study on the meaning of music in children’s lives in the USA, Campbell refers to “enculturative learning, natural and without formal instruction” (1988, p. 178). This type of learning is by no means confined to the Western world. Elsewhere, Campbell reports that “Yung observed that children in China who are motivated to become more musical do so by watching adults perform and then imitating them. Many more, Yung claimed, learn music from television, video, karaoke sets, cassette tapes, and CDs” (1996b, p. 70). Children are exposed to hours of music every day, and hear and (partially) learn hundreds of songs a year, consciously or unconsciously. This is a contemporary reality to be reckoned with at all levels of music teaching and learning.

**Restriction and freedom**

There are no traditions without restrictions. Rules help define the tradition and distinguish its characteristics from others. But they also, even mainly, serve an artistic purpose. When Schuon speaks of the results of the ban on using images in Muslim art, he observes that “this restriction in Islamic Art, by eliminating certain creative possibilities, intensified others” (1959, p. 74). The fugue or highly stylised sonnet form have a similar effect in music and literature. And in the same way, we can argue that the strict rules governing melodic movement in the ragas of North Indian music force the musician into the depth of the musical possibilities.

This is one of the key aspects of narrowly defined artistic traditions. The freedom comes from feeling familiar with the space within the confinement. This can cause an almost metaphysical experience. Once an Indian music student has absorbed the tradition sufficiently, the constraints dictated by the tradition of each *raga* and *tala* remain the same, but as he becomes more accomplished, the perception of room for movement widens. Whilst in the beginning, the student struggles to find the next beat in the *tala*, or the right intonation in a sliding note, the accomplished musician feels he has time and space to experiment and push even rigid rules to their limits. He is able to find and explore beauty in a single rhythmic unit or tone. In a similar way, he does not have to search frantically for a next phrase in an improvisation, but can choose from a diversity of possible lines of development that arise from a
combination of creativity, many years of practice, and a profound awareness of the tradition. This translates into a sense of control and maturity of expression (personal experience/observation, 1975 - 1995).

Stasis and dynamism

While one of the prominent features of tradition as a whole is the perpetuation of a particular body of knowledge, a living tradition is emphatically a vehicle for constant change: inspired by the present, and informed by the past. From this angle, the recent *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* definition of tradition reads dynamic, and in striking contrast with the definitions at the beginning of this chapter:

Continual creation and re-creation of culture by the manipulation of symbolic elements and the reordering and refocusing of inherited cultural constructs to reflect present-day needs and desires. (Garland, 2002, Vol X, General Glossary)

Different traditions have different natures and reasons for existing. Consequently, views on the nature of tradition vary. Some ritual and social traditions have a context that dictates conservatism. The chanting of the *vedas*, the scriptures that form basis of Hinduism, or of a catholic mass, may not incorporate a great scope for change. Ritual music tends to be static. These are traditions that have developed into factors of stability in society. In the more classically oriented traditions, there are also restrictive mechanisms for innovation. New ideas can be either rejected (especially if they do not come from an established master), get a lukewarm response (after which they fade out), or be embraced by the guardians of the tradition, the audience and/or younger musicians (and consequently become part of the tradition). This is not necessarily an invisible and subtle process. In India, senior musicians used to get on stage to reprimand or beat a young musician who was playing in a way they considered inappropriate in the tradition (Shankar, 1968, p. 57).

Other traditions (such as folk, but especially popular music) are only able to survive if they are able to adapt to new circumstances rapidly. The African pop musician loses his audience and livelihood if he does not change quickly with the tastes of the time. This holds true for the North Indian sitar player in a much slower cycle of change, as his classical tradition is more resistant to rapid change. The same goes to some extent for the Western orchestra, which may be conceived as obeying a static tradition because the notes played do not change; but the interpretation and presentation varies considerably for audiences in different decades, as we can easily witness even in the time of recorded music, from Furtwängler to Harnoncourt to Nigel Kennedy.

Consequently, in terms of susceptibility to rapid change, we can identify differences between written and oral traditions. But these are differences of degree. The anthropologist Goody (1968) expressed a belief that oral traditions change completely and immediately with the society they exist in. In the paraphrase of Vansina, “this is the product of a dynamic homeostasis. At any given time traditions are
perfectly congruent with the society. Any alteration in social organization or practice is immediately accompanied by a corresponding alternation in traditions. Therefore, the corpus of traditions constantly changes and cannot correspond to a past reality” (1985, p. 20). This represents a rather naïve perception about oral traditions. Based on his research in oral histories, Vansina acknowledges the value of the basic idea, but does not support it as a sweeping generalisation. He comes to a more realistic view:

Goody exaggerates his thesis, both in the sharpness of the opposition between “oral” and “literate” … and in the claim for total homeostasis. In short there is congruence but there is no total congruence of content with the concerns of the present. Continuous selection of intentional historical accounts does not perfectly operate. The presence of archaisms in various traditions gives homeostasis the lie. (Vansina, 1985, p. 121)

In spite of these archaisms, there are undeniably powerful and continuous processes of change, which are likely to be stronger in oral traditions than in ones that are notation-based. The stimuli for change derive both from within cultures of origin, and from the outside. Both need to be taken account in thinking about tradition in music. As Nketia wrote as early as the 1960s: “Change, we know, is inevitable in any living culture. The musical cultures of Subsaharan Africa and Ghana in particular […] have not been free from change both through interaction among themselves and through external contacts” (Nketia, n.d., p. 1). Particularly the external contacts have developed to unequalled intensity over the past decades. Baumann describes local and global cultures in a state of constant flow:

Today regional traditions have an interactive relationship with multilingualism and intercultural music-making and improvisation […] In the area of music, increasing multipolar orientations create a continuous deconstruction of concepts of culture and identity. The local and the region, the national and the global have become interconnected in the cultural process of tradition in a “glocal” network. (Baumann, 2000, p. 121)

We will investigate these dynamics in more detail in the paragraphs on recontextualisation later in this chapter, but we can already establish that it is in fact quite common to see musical expressions adapting to new circumstances at a variety of levels: in social settings, content, performance styles, and modes of transmission. It is this dynamism in relation to context that often results in the vitality of music travelling. The solo djembe performances of Adame Drame in Paris depart drastically from the tradition of the percussion groups in Guinea, but it has become a new, powerful tradition in its own right (see also the discussion on recontextualisation later in this chapter), and so has salsa in New York. Therefore, we can establish that music travels and changes in time, in space. A major factor in processes of musical change is that of (niche) market demands. Not everybody tries to be Eminem, but different forms of Western classical music undeniably have their own market (an excellent example is the rise of the ancient music practices as described in Cook, 1998, p. 12). When there is no market, the music tends to disappear. ‘Traditionalist’ ethnomusicologists may deplore the disappearance of an obscure drumming tradition from Malaysia. However, apart from non-musical forces such as
economical, military or political power, very often there is a musical reason for traditions to disappear. They have served their purpose, and new ones take their place. Hardly anyone listens to the music of Pat Boone these days, and very few efforts are undertaken to preserve his heritage. Forgetting, losing the tradition, changing the genre: all of these are part of the dynamic process in contemporary musical realities.

In this way, a wide range of interpretations of tradition appears to exist. We can identify a number of indicators for predominantly static or predominantly dynamic approaches to tradition, whether those involved approach traditions as being defined by a canon or body of works; a standard based on an explicit or implicit set of rules; a performance practice; music in culture; or a mechanism of handing down music. The predominantly static approach would be characterized by a body of work that has been in existence for a considerable amount of time, with no new additions, in a closed system, where the tradition is a sign of distinction for an established class, whether social or religious, with sometimes less emphasis on artistic value then on function in society (as in much ritual music). The dynamic approach would typically show musical styles deriving their existence from a continuous process of change and innovation, with the music being young and/or constantly exposed to new influences. As an examination of different musical traditions in Chapters Six and Seven will illustrate, virtually no musical tradition would be qualified as all static or all flexible. A continuum would again serve best to represent the various possibilities:

Table 3.1 Approaches to tradition as a continuum

| STATIC TRADITION | CONSTANT FLUX |

**Tradition and music education**

As we have discussed, one of the crucial elements in the survival of a tradition is its method of transmission. Especially in the case of unwritten traditions, this is where the music of the recent past is handed on. But the process involves more than the musical material itself. In both written and unwritten traditions, a complex of thoughts and approaches to music are handed down from teacher to student. This will be dealt with extensively in Chapter Four. In forms of music that do not have a written tradition to refer to, teachers often express a conservative approach to the music they are handing down. Almost without exception, they will praise the past and express concern about the future, criticising young musicians for a lack of knowledge or respect for the tradition. If these views are correct, traditions would only deteriorate. However, this conservatism forms an important mechanism which is in the interest of living traditions: in order to avoid rapid change with the possible consequence of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, a conservative mechanism is built into the process. We will come back to these processes in some of the case studies.
When examining music education in the classroom, it is possible to distinguish between various approaches to tradition. The most common phenomenon is presenting world music as a series of static entities. This goes back to the nineteenth and early twentieth century European conception we discussed in the context of early ethnomusicology: the Western world is modern and dynamic, and other cultures stagnated in their development at various stages, from the 'primitive' cultures of Africa and Oceania to the (relatively) 'high cultures' of Asia and the world of Islam. Material and approaches emphasizing the dynamics of music across the world require more complex insights and methodologies, and consequently are rare.

**Authenticity**

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

Mautner's *A Dictionary of Philosophy* defines authenticity as "the quality of being genuine, being true to oneself," and traces its use from Socrates, who referred to the "authenticity of the self," the genuineness of his thought and actions, on to Augustine, who emphasized the spiritual nature of the true self as opposed to the inauthentic demands of desire and the body, to Rousseau, who contrasted the true, authentic, natural self with the corruption imposed by society, and finally to Kierkegaard, who insisted that the authentic self was the personally chosen self, as opposed to one's public or herd identity (Mautner, 1995, p. 39). While Mautners view is quite refined, in the discussions and literature music and on music education authenticity often seems to have taken on uncritically positive overtones, sometimes even of correctness or moral justness. As I will demonstrate, this can easily cloud critical observation, and begs the question: "is authenticity just a synonym for 'good'?" (Davison, 2001, p. 264).

In music, authenticity has been equalled with "historically correct" by the early music revival movement from the 1950s or 1960s, and with "placed in the original context" by early ethnomusicologists. However, it is difficult to maintain that any art form exists merely to be reproduced in a historically correct manner, or in original context. Others might argue that the key to authenticity lies in aesthetics or emotional effect. The discussion revolves around whether the essence lie in the notes, in the instruments used, the setting, the context, in the sound, in the attitude or frame of mind of the musician, or in some intangible approach.
If we return to the original meaning of the word, it refers in the first place to the hand that created the work of art, to the manuscript. But what should be considered an authentic performance of a work by Mozart: one where the performer follows the improvised cadenzas in a piano concerto as written by the composer (or a later one), or where he follows the tradition of improvising that particular section? In this and (almost) all considerations of authenticity, the reference (eg the written work, the performance practice) and the criteria (eg historical accuracy, aesthetic effect) have to be defined.

Western musical history of the past decades has seen a lively discussion on authenticity, particularly in the context of pre-Romantic performance practice. At first, the focus seems to have been on trying to approach the authentic through historically accurate ensembles and period instruments, playing historically correct scores. Cook, in a publication which demonstrates the challenges of arriving at ‘authentic’ scores even for established classical composers, comments on the phenomenon of authentic performance, now also referred to with the less pretentious epithet “historically informed”:

As a slogan, “authenticity” neatly combined two things. On the one hand, the claim was that performance on the appropriate period instruments, based on the performance practices codified, was “authentic” in the sense of historically correct. On the other, the term “authenticity” brought into play all those positive connotations I talked about [in an earlier chapter], the idea of being sincere, genuine, true to yourself. In this way, if you played Bach on the piano – if your performance wasn’t authentic – then you weren’t simply wrong in the scholarly sense: you were wrong in the moral sense too. (Cook, 1998, p. 13)

Cook continues to remark that “the classical music industry markets the great interpreters in their role of originators, or ‘authors’ rather than mere reproducers of music, and so upholds the same values of authenticity that are found in popular music” (ibid., p. 13). But ironically, in the literature on music, he notices that “performers are conspicuous by their absence” (ibid., p. 14). Here, the focus is on composers and their works:

And even within the select world of the composer, the same value system operates: academic writing on music almost invariably emphasizes the innovators, the creators of tradition, the Beethovens and the Schoenbergs, at the expense of the many more conservative composers who write within the framework of an established style. A value system is in place within our culture, which places innovation above tradition, creation above reproduction, personal expression above the marketplace. In a word, music must be authentic, for otherwise it is hardly music at all. (Cook, 1998, p. 14)

Although statements such as this reflect only a particular tradition of valuing, rather than the realities of musical performance at large, they are indicative of a choice of references rather than a single reference, just as we have witnessed in the discussion on tradition. In Cook’s view, academic writing favours innovative composers and their written works, rather than contemporary performance
practices. That represents a limited interpretation of authenticity, and one that does not do justice to its multiple meanings.

Tomlinson refers to “musical meaning,” which he thinks, characterises “the shared goal of music historians and historical performers more precisely than the usual ‘authenticity’” (1988, p. 115). After wondering if mere historically informed performance is the best way to reach this “musical meaning,” he distinguishes between the meaning intended by the composer, and the meaning emanating from performance practice, both of which are governed by the realistic axiom that meaning is contextual (ibid., p. 120). This very general “definition” is in fact all but precise, and does not help much to focus the discussion. It inevitably leads to a subjective approach to authenticity: “Authenticity in historical thought is a product of the historian’s ability to dissociate two meaningful contexts that he himself has created: his own and his subjects” (ibid., 1988, p. 120). In spite of the obvious complexities and limitations of such an approach, in his article Tomlinson refutes authentic performers in the narrower sense of the word for the “positivistic dead-end they have travelled down in their search for the original sound” (ibid., pp. 125-126), and seems to be sure that the authentic meanings are of the greatest inherent value: “At worst, the meanings presented are all but inherently irrelevant to the authentic meanings of the work” (ibid., p. 126). While his criticism of a very narrow, instrument-sound based approach makes perfectly good sense in the search for a wider frame of reference, it still does not provide us with a clear image of what to look for.

Grove Music Online provides a much more accommodating and perhaps the most satisfying description of historically informed performance, touching on most of the areas discussed before, but it also fails to take a clear position on the relative relevance of various interpretations:

“Authentic” performance may refer to one or any combination of the following approaches: use of instruments from the composer’s own era; use of performing techniques documented in the composer’s era; performance based on the implications of the original sources for a particular work; fidelity to the composer’s intentions for performance or to the type of performance a composer desired or achieved; an attempt to re-create the context of the original performance; and an attempt to re-create the musical experience of the original audience. (Butt, 2003)

In world music, authenticity often implies 1) coming from the right country; 2) being unaffected by outside influences; or 3) presented exactly as it is in the original social context. In the ‘authentic’ world music movement, which was represented for instance by the Extra European Arts Committee (EEAC) in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a strong predilection for aging musicians representing obscure, vanishing traditions. New developments were shunned, particularly those attracting large audiences in their culture of origin, and involving modern instruments and amplification. Put extremely: in this approach it seems as if when a musical style is not on the verge of extinction, it is
not authentic. This approach is difficult to maintain in the realities of modern performance practices, as it bypasses considerations of power of expression and ability to communicate to an audience.

At a more abstract level, the latter considerations lead us on a quest of authenticity as identified by representatives of specific world music traditions themselves. In that context, we can place concepts such as *rasa* (India), *duende* (Andalusia), and *tarab* (World of Islam), which are all used by musicians to refer to the ‘real feeling’ or ‘essence’ of their music. Consequently, this is an area that is of crucial importance in defining authenticity from the inside, but at the same time one that will always remain subject to opinions of groups or individuals. However, it does contribute to putting into perspective the importance of ‘authenticity by original context’ emphasised by many ethnomusicologists since Merriam, as these internal values can travel relatively freely with music and musicians.

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

The defining term in rock ideology is authenticity. Rock is distinguished from pop as the authentic expression of a performer’s or composer's feelings and the authentic representation of a social situation. Rock is at once the mainstream of commercial music and a romantic art form, a voice from the social margins. Presley's first album for RCA in 1956 was just as carefully packaged to present him as an authentic, street-credible musician (plucking an acoustic guitar on the album cover) as was Public Enemy's classic *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, issued by the CBS-backed Def Jam in 1988; Madonna was every bit as concerned with revealing her artifice as art in the 1980s as Dylan was in the '60s. (Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 2003)

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

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

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

In relation to world pop, the debate gains another dimension, fed by the earlier 'world music authenticity' discussion. Taylor points out the confusion and ethnocentricity that surrounds the concept in pop music from a world perspective: while Western pop musicians are appreciated for breaking cultural barriers, non-Western pop stars are often condemned for not being 'authentic.' He introduces the term 'strategic inauthenticity,' a quality that he ascribes to strong, independent world musicians such as Youssou N'Dour and Cheb Khaled, who refuse to be pigeonholed and move freely between their musical heritage and new influences (1997, pp. 126-136). Taylor designates the concern with being true to one's tradition (in the sense of music fixed in culture) as premodern, while he calls the more eclectic approach an expression of postmodernism (1997, p. 143). This provides an intelligent and realistic perspective.

In this way, pop music generates a refreshing new setting for thinking on authenticity. In this context, Moore proposed a model that does away with the notion of authenticity as "inscribed," focusing on who is being authenticated rather then what. "This model consists of first, second and third person authenticity, with the performer, listener and absent other authenticated by these modes, respectively (...) Much of the ... discussion focused upon Moore’s model, and the notion of authenticity as scribed - whether to a performer, performance or work, and so on - as a percever" (Davison, 2001, p. 264). Although this discussion moves the focus away from the interpretation of “authentic works” in the way they are perceived in western classical music, it is important to realise that the “who” being authenticated is a persona in relation to a particular stage in their musical life. It is quite possible for musicians to sell out to commercial success at one stage of their careers, and work from a sense of profound artistic integrity at another. This represents a shift from inauthentic to authentic.

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

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

When musics of the world travel, the attitude of both the teachers and the students tends to be quite traditional. Accomplished masters of a tradition "fix" it when leaving on the basis of the culture at the time of their departure. Students outside of the culture also seem to be more interested in what is ancient in the culture they are learning. Developments in a tradition that have taken place after a teacher left his country are often discarded as superficial, new-fangled fads. In this way, his students may develop an approach to music that is generations behind the situation in the country of origin. In this sense, even in 'living traditions,' we find a strong tendency towards historical authenticity, going back to the last contact with the culture of origin.

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

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

In research on the subject by Campbell, she found that:

Interestingly, authenticity was deemed by some of the ethnomusicologists interviewed as having minimal importance. Yung explained: “I almost never use ‘authentic’ to discuss the music of China, because it implies absolute values” that are non-existent within so historically long and varied a nation. [...] “Where is one to draw the cut-off line” between the authentic and pure music and the music that has been borrowed, adapted, and accepted as their own by the people of a designated culture? (1996b, p. 68)

Meanwhile, there remain educators who believe that authenticity can best be defined very narrowly. Campbell reports Loza as saying “Once you take the music out of its cultural context, it’s no longer authentic” (ibid., p. 69). Another interesting example of an effort to emulate this type of authenticity is the project “Culture bearers in the Classroom”, which was carried out by a number of schools in the Seattle area with the University of Washington in the late 1990s. In this project, rather than using approaches deemed less opportune such as singing songs from transcriptions, experimenting on indigenous instruments, or merely listening to music, people who could be considered owners of the tradition were asked to work with children in primary schools (Campbell, 1998). Although this approach does resolve the limitations of some other approaches, it does not address the problem raised by Klinger above, and is vulnerable to weaknesses in communication and transmission of culture bearers who have no training or experience in working with children in schools (personal observation, 1990-1997).

An unorthodox approach was quoted in the rationale at the beginning of this study, where Jennifer Walden, a Canadian music teacher at the International School in Kuala Lumpur, teaches a Sumatran drumming tradition to a very mixed student population, using drums from six different cultures. While authenticity in the sense of trying to recreate an existing practice was absent from virtually all factors one can describe, in the light of the preceding discussion we can establish the experience became authentic in the sense of a ‘new identity’ generated by the sound and feeling of the event. The experience focused on musical experience rather than anthropological elements.

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

Table 3.2 Relationship between original musical event and new reality

![Image of two overlapping circles](image)

(based on Campbell, lecture at Dartington College of Arts, 1998)

In both music performance and education, authenticity is an elusive and particularly laden concept. Partly because of its implied sense of ‘goodness’ in the literature on music education, the discussion often becomes muddled. We have seen that one cluster of interpretations refers to authenticity as corresponding to original models in historical or geographical terms. We have also seen that this approach does not necessarily make clear which aspects of the music need to be correct in order to deserve the epithet ‘authentic’; the suggestion is to have the right instruments or acoustic recordings rather than musical meaning. From the world of popular music, we encounter a meaning close to the ideas from Socrates to Kierkegaard of being true to oneself, irrespective of models or traditions. In world music, we encounter both. A non-static approach to all of the factors discussed and their interaction is required in order to fully understand the various perspectives on authenticity in music education in culturally diverse settings, tailored to specific models and settings in education. This is becoming increasingly relevant in contemporary culturally diverse societies. With the decline of a one-on-one link between musical tastes and ethnicity of second and third generation minorities, eclectic musical mixes, and new musical realities, authenticity in the narrow sense is becoming less and less of an issue amongst musicians and learners.

Considering authenticity at large, we can observe it is used in almost diametrically opposed meanings. While the early music practice aims at faithful reproduction of historical originals, we have seen that conservative ethnomusicological approaches aim at recreating local settings. Rock musicians emphatically do not want to copy an original, but to be original. Paradoxically, the aim of each of these approaches is to create the most truthful musical experience possible. Like tradition, we can represent the various approaches to authenticity as a continuum, with the interpretations tending towards reproduction to the left, and the ones focusing on originality to the right:
Table 3.3 Approaches to authenticity as a continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(RECONSTRUCTED)</th>
<th>AUTHENTICITY</th>
<th>NEW IDENTITY</th>
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**Context**

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

Nettl’s views also resound in the ISME *Policy on Musics of the World’s Cultures* (which he co-formulated): “Music can best be comprehended in social and cultural context and as a part of its culture. Properly understanding a culture requires some understanding of its music, and appreciating a music requires some knowledge of its associated culture and society” (ISME, 1992; Appendix A2).

First, we have to determine what we are speaking of when we consider context, as there are several approaches of context. For instance, we can distinguish:

- **Temporal Context.** With this, I refer both to music in real time (which implies that all recordings are out of context), and to historical context. While the first is the continuous professional concern of performers, many scholars stressed the importance of the latter. Tomlinson says that when we view a work of art “a-historically – as aesthetic object uprooted from some context that we believe engendered them and transplanted into our own cultural humus – then we forfeit the possibility of conversing meaningfully with their creators” (Tomlinson, 1988, p. 121). A question that arises from this, of course, is what exactly is gained by a meaningful conversation with these creators. As we discussed in the paragraphs on authenticity, the intentions of another time and place do not necessarily find resonance with present-day musicians and audiences.

- **Acoustic Context.** This refers to the space for which the music was originally created: a concert hall, a busy street, a desert, a church or temple, a concert hall, or a music room in a house in contemporary music practice. This context is often ignored, and includes considering
the use of amplification, which paradoxically forms part of the original context for most pop music. All recordings of live music can be considered out of original context as well, while for certain traditions of electronic music, the recording is the original context.

- **Ideological Context.** Some issues in this category have been addressed in the discussions on tradition and authenticity. There are other types of context that are of significance to musical transmission and learning, such as views on the origins of music and approaches to talent. Although it is beyond the scope of this work to go deeply into this subject, it may be worthwhile to quote two significant examples from Africa. Berliner emphasises the role of spirits in learning the traditional music of the Shona people of Zimbabwe on the *mbira* (Berliner, 1981, pp. 136-137). Blacking's account of perceptions of universal musical talent - or at least aptitude - among the Venda in South Africa is well-known (1973). Obviously, these ideas influence the musical transmission process considerably.

- **Social Context.** The social context is an important aspect to consider in relation to choosing position for music education. For this, it is important to know what background in the culture of origin the music comes from, for instance as a community activity, a ritual, a business, or as an abstract expression of human creativity. Responses to music - and consequently motivation for learning it - are influenced by the real or perceived social status of a music. As Swanwick says: "Social position, age, family background, circles of friends and education, all have a part to play in determining the value position from which music is regarded. No one is free to swim away from a whole raft of value assumptions which determine not only what music we can engage with but how we might respond to it" (Swanwick, 1988, p. 98).

Ideological and social context are referred to most frequently in arguments that music must be considered in cultural context, with emphasis on the cultural environment in which the music originated. However, the point can be made that the key issue in the discussion on context is: how strongly is a particular music rooted in a particular context, and does a valid musical experience (from the point of view of an audience) remain if we remove it from this context? This process of decontextualisation appears to be most effortless with both art music and commercial music. As we have seen, Western classical music has been decontextualised to a great extent, in terms of both time and place, which is one of the reasons why it has travelled so well. In contemporary practice, Classical Indian music is quite free of its historical contexts of temples and courts as well, and has settled comfortably in various new settings, ranging from cultural elites across the world, which are quite in line with the history of the music, to hippie and new age audiences, which developed as an unexpected but substantial market. And modern pop music increasingly has its roots in a global youth culture, and consequently has a world-wide context, which includes the audio-visual context of the video-clip. But there are examples from the other categories as well: African
rhythms that in their original context are strongly linked to very specific social settings and ritual events have also gained widespread popularity, as has samba, which in Brazil is a form of community activity, linked to the very specific event known as Carnival.

Beyond the acoustic experience, context plays a role when trying to get a deeper understanding of any particular music, for instance how a particular music came to take its present form. This may require an extensive knowledge of the social and philosophical circumstances, like those that have led to Korean chongak: a ritual tradition steeped in moral ideas about music (Howard, 1999, pp. 78-79). But a relevant context may also be shaped by something quite mundane, such as the influence of a specific instrument. To quote a very specific example by Blacking: “we know much about the theory and practice of harmony in the European ‘art’ music of the nineteenth century, but when we analyze the music of Hector Berlioz it is useful to know that he often worked out harmonic procedures on a guitar, and that the structure of the instrument influenced many of his chord sequences” (1973, p. 21).

However, none of these aspects of context are crucial to the success of music moving over time and/or space: understanding the context of any form of music may result in a deeper understanding, but they are not decisive factors in communicating to new audiences. We have already seen that there are numerous examples of music reaching and touching audiences who have little or no knowledge of its original context. Consequently, dogmatic approaches to context as a *sine qua non* for valuable musical experiences must be rejected, and a more dynamic model needs to be embraced.

**Recontextualisation**

In Chapter One, we have seen that one of the striking characteristics of the musics we are dealing with is their travelling around the world. By necessity this creates new contexts for these musics, and consequently challenges the perception advocated by many ethnomusicologists that music is inextricably linked to its culture of origin. If ritual music from West African villages appeals to a concert audience in Paris, if Indian court music finds willing ears from Sydney to Stockholm, and eighteenth century Lutheran German music is appreciated in twentieth century Tokyo and New York, we have to re-examine ideas concerning the need for original cultural context. In that process, it may take on a new identity as discussed in the paragraph on authenticity, but it remains clearly identifiable as the tradition that started the journey. It may be naive to say that music is a universal language that transcends all boundaries, but it does seem that a great deal of music travels remarkably well.

We don’t have to look very far for recontextualisation. Any contemporary performance of Bach’s *Matthew’s Passion* in a modern concert hall for a non-Lutheran audience is an exercise in recontextualisation par excellence. Recontextualisation is the norm rather than the exception. Obviously, all performances of Indian classical music in the West are recontextualised. But so are all
performances of Indian music in India to a considerable extent, when a middle class audience of predominantly Hindus in expensive saris and suits go to a concert hall in Delhi to listen to a singer who sings through a microphone on a stage, not in a music room at a Moghul court. Many Indian artists have emphasized that their music is basically the same whether they perform in a concert hall in Utrecht or in front of an audience in Calcutta (Ali Akbar Khan, Bhihm Joshi, Hariprasad Chaurasia, personal communications, 1980-1990). Most of these musicians would argue it is even experienced in a very similar way: even though the audience may not have the terminology or the philosophical background, they feel that the aesthetic reaction it evokes is similar. This may well be true, particularly for audiences that have had enough exposure to become accustomed to the idiom of Indian classical music.

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

Another striking example of recontextualisation takes place in many African countries, which have created national music and dance troupes, where the music and dance from various villages and ethnic groups are orchestrated and choreographed for performance by a group of performers across ethnic and regional boundaries. These developments are not necessarily good or bad, but they are a new artistic reality. They emphasise the need to be aware where to place these musics on the continuum from original context to completely recontextualised when looking at musical traditions in relation to music education, and to consider to what extent these musics may have changed in the process.

In this light, it is difficult to maintain that works of music can be seen as either *autonomous* works of art or expressions of cultures in the strictest sense. Whenever they are heard, they are heard in a new context. And even the driest of researchers trying to look at a piece of music objectively will make choices, which are dictated by context. Focus on establishing pitch changes in time rather than physical impact on the listener, social effect or its power to call forth spirits of the forefathers are important choices, which will have decisive effects on the outcome of the study or experience of music. While Western thinking on music has outgrown the misconception that Indian ragas are primitive because they do not use counterpoint and harmony, it is equally inappropriate to apply Western classical music criteria to *house music*: the fact that it appeals to millions of young people across the world is ample testimony to its success as music in a specific context.
As one of the first music educators to embrace the dynamic view of context that arises from this discussion, Swanwick argues that "musical procedures can be absorbed and re-used over centuries of time, between vastly differing cultures and across miles of geographical space; they are not irrevocably buried in local life-styles, even though they may have their birth there. Musical elements — that is to say, the sensory impact of sound materials, expressive characterization and structural organisation — have a degree of cultural autonomy which enables them to be taken over and reworked into traditions far removed from their origins" (1988, p. 107). Although this approach may lean too heavily towards a claiming that the essence of a music lies in its formal qualities, it does open the road for a less static view of context in music education.

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

Table 3.4 Approaches to context as a continuum

| ORIGINAL CONTEXT | COMPLETELY RECONTEXTUALISED |

Context in music education

When considering context in music education, there are two distinct areas that need discussion: teaching specific traditions, which is the central focus of this study, and teaching world music in the classroom. The former is a subject that has hardly received any attention in the literature; the latter has been much-discussed, as we have seen in Chapter Two. The International Society for Music Education sets high goals for both areas, and recommends "that music education methods in the teaching of the world's musics be formulated in such a way that the aesthetic integrity of the musics, and when possible their authentic processes of transmission, be fully respected" (ISME, 1992; Appendix A2).

While this reads perfectly reasonable at first sight, it centres on two concepts that are open to multiple interpretations. Aesthetic integrity echoes the earlier discussions on authenticity with its almost contradictory interpretations, as does authentic in relation to transmission processes. In fact the
formulated ISME policy stimulates awareness of the need to define a position, but raises more questions than it provides answers.

In music education in schools, these questions arise on the work floor. Campbell reports on a "heated debate amongst teachers," with radically opposed views between the experts she interviewed, ranging from "What's the purpose of playing Thai music on specially tuned xylophones if students don't know where Thailand is or what it is?" (Miller) to Yung's experience in learning Western classical music in China and Hong Kong: "No one gave me information of the cultural background or context of the music, but by listening I developed a sense of what was 'good music'." Yung proceeded to explain that "verbal knowledge about music is less important than the sound itself," and claimed that "an emphasis on the cultural and social background may even block the students' opportunities to develop a closeness with the music" (1996b, p. 69). This echoes the views of Swanwick, and supports the validity of 'low original context' approaches such as those of Walden in Kuala Lumpur, which were referred to earlier in this study.

When discussing context in relation to music education, it is important to define whether we are discussing the context of the original musical practice or the context of the transmission process. This creates four possible situations, all of which occur at some time or other. We can encounter a) the teaching of traditional material in a traditional manner; b) traditional material being handed down in a new context (most frequent); c) non-traditional material being handed down in a traditional manner (quite rare); and d) non-traditional material being handed down in a non-traditional manner. That may sound more complicated than it is. In practical settings, the situation is often directed by the possibilities and constraints of the new institutional or social context, as we will see in Chapter Five. Music teachers will generally adapt their styles of teaching to the new context in which they function, and possibly the material they teach as well. Even when a student goes to India and studies with a genuine Indian guru, he will be creating a new context for a music that has been transmitted largely within family traditions for many centuries. In virtually all contemporary settings for music teaching and learning, static concepts of context are challenged.

Whilst studying, classroom music teachers are made acutely aware of the concept of context and its importance in teaching world music. The literature discussed in Chapter Two illustrates this. In terms of teaching materials, many introductions to world music - particularly for education - begin with a long introduction on the country; lessons will very often start by indicating the origin of a particular piece of music on a world map: "This sound comes from this little turquoise country next to the big green one." Even amongst young teachers who have been taught to do otherwise, this is a persistent practice. This became evident from observing the teaching internships of a number of the students at Amsterdam Conservatoire in 1998, who had recently been to the Gambia for first-hand experience of
other forms of learning. When insecure, however, they tended to reach back to learning experiences from their own school days, contributing to a fossilisation of educational ideas (Lesson observation notes, March 1998).

How does one recreate the appropriate context in an African percussion lessons when working on a rhythm linked to circumcision? It may not be long before teachers runs out of boys if they take faithful representation of the original context too seriously. Or at a much more innocent level: does it really help students understand Javanese gamelan to know that Indonesia consists of 14,000 islands? The same applies to western music when it is recontextualised: while the presence of hundreds of unwashed people during the performance of Bach's religious works may have been a salient feature in eighteenth century practice, but may not be relevant context now. The acoustics of the church, however, may be quite important. Selection of context relevant to the music being dealt with is complicated but crucial. In the case of Indonesia, it might help to understand the differences between Balinese and Javanese gamelan to know the two have developed on separate islands, with different religions and customs. Similarly, it may help understand the dynamics of contemporary African music to consider it as an area linked both to the world of Islam and to the new world.

As we have seen, there is a realistic hurdle to be crossed. Blacking argued that people can be alienated by music “when they perceive: a) its sound materials as strange, or threatening; b) its expressive characters to be strongly identified with another culture; c) its structure as either repetitive or confusing or aimless” (1988, p. 98). This reads as an argument to place emphasis on context before confronting learners with sounds to which they are not accustomed. As we have seen in the discussions on the philosophy of music education, however, Swanwick argues exactly the opposite approach when dealing with first introductions to music. After speaking on judgment based on real or perceived extra-musical factors, he pleads for avoiding “labelling altogether until the music has been really experienced” (Swanwick, 1988, p. 97). Although Swanwick's approach at first glance appears to resolve the ‘problem’ of supplying learners with a context, it almost inevitably leads to a situation where listeners apply already acquired frames of reference to the new music. However, it may well be successful in the case of very young learners, who have fewer preconceptions on how music should sound.

The positions of Blacking and Swanwick also raise an interesting philosophical question: if music has an intimate relationship with its context of origin, then this context might well be embodied in the music itself. In that case, one can first play the music, and then ask questions to construct a relevant context. In music in schools, this could be done through questions such as: Are there hills in this country, is it peaceful? Are there kings or queens? This is an exercise in creating appropriate context
from the music. It reverses the argument: if the culture is in the music, it should also be possible to abstract essential elements from it, or at least to generate questions investigating the context.

Experience from a project called “Muziekateliers” (lit. Music Workshops), which ran in Amsterdam in the 1990s, supports the validity of an approach where original context was all but ignored. In sessions called Trommelen op de Wereld (Drumming on the World) three percussion teachers from three different world percussion backgrounds performed for children at elementary schools, including them in the process. Not a word was spoken about the background of the darbuka, the conga or the djembe, but the children were stimulated to appreciate musical traditions quite foreign to their own through the sounds, the dynamics and the interplay between the musicians and themselves, and started asking questions exploring use and context of the music, motivated by the experience of its practice and sounds (Personal observations, Muziekschool Amsterdam, 1996).

An important aspect of the context of music in education is also the aesthetic/acoustic consideration: how far removed from the students’ perception is this music when they hear it? This is something that plays a role in all music teaching. And it is not only dictated by geographical, but also by historical and social context. Reggae music from Jamaica is likely to sound more familiar to children at the beginning of the third millennium than the music of Mahler or Messiaen.

In fact, we can relate this relative alienation to specific cultural perspectives. Bayaka pygmees are not likely to be immediately enthralled with Italian opera on first hearing, and Quebec Canadians may generally not choose to listen to Japanese Buddhist shömyö. But when we look closer, we will find that cultural distance is a personal continuum for every individual. From each individual’s perspective, we can ask how far a particular music is removed from the sound world they are accustomed to or in which they feel comfortable. This in fact results in yet another continuum from very familiar (songs people heard on the radio when they were young) to very far from one’s familiar idiom (for instance shömyö chanting for most Westerners). Although this continuum is not a common reference in the music education literature, we can see the concept implicitly applied. Campbell, for instance, relates the idea to educational settings and opportunities in a “Concentric Circles Music Model,” in which three concentric circles represent the Musical Self, “What we’ve known; our own musical heritage,” Musical Training, “What we ought to know,” and Musical Outreach, “What our local and regional communities can offer” (1996a, p. 27).

In the end, however, there is no stock answer to the question of what and how much context should be included in teaching world music. Decisions can only be based on intelligently weighing the various arguments as discussed for each specific situation. In music education, not only for world music, but
also for Western music from various periods (cf Drummmond, 2000, pp. 22-24), a five-step procedure can make educators aware of the main points to consider when dealing with recontextualisation:

Table 3.5 Recontextualising music in education – a dynamic approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is relevant there/then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is relevant here/now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is feasible (in practical terms)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can/should be added?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This ‘commonsense view of context’ has not pervaded common practice yet. Merriam’s *Anthropology of Music* echoes through in educational design across the Western world. Merriam may have helped kindle new waves of interest in musics of the world, but his views have been instrumental in inspiring a stifling fear of enjoying or learning world musics outside of their original context, or at least a significant attempt to include this in music teaching and learning. In the view of many practitioners to this day, teaching music must include cultural context, or at least an attempt to recreate it (eg Campbell, 1996; Volk, 1998).

This view persists in spite of the argument for educators not to be overly concerned with presenting music out of its original context, as there is always a new context to take its place. When a music teacher experiences salsa through a headset in a train to work, it is accepted as a new and acceptable new context, mostly without thinking. In their daily work in schools, almost all subjects are approached outside of their original context. When David McAllester was told by a Navajo ceremonial practitioner that doing certain squaw dance music and peyote music would be acceptable in a classroom, but senseless out of context, he reported that he “began to realize that much of our education is out of context. Much of what we teach is as if you were an engineer, or as if you were a mathematician. This is the foundation of our educational philosophy” (Campbell, 1996b, p. 10). If educational systems expect children to learn skills that they themselves will recontextualise in real life settings, they may also be able to do so with musical experiences. Consequently, the only logical way to deal with context is to approach it with intelligence and sensitivity, assessing the relevance of different aspects in each individual case, with consideration for specific (groups of) learners.
One of these groups worth considering in order to add more perspective to the discussion is that of those training to become professional musicians in a world music tradition. This group presents a considerable dichotomy between practice and literature. The literature tends to argue that extensive exposure to original context is a sine qua non for in-depth learning of musics from other cultures. This is taken so far as to suggest that one has to be raised in a particular context in order to gain mastery over another musical culture. Blacking states in *How Musical is Man*: “I am convinced that a trained musician could not compose music that was absolutely new and specifically Venda, and acceptable as such to Venda audiences, unless he has been brought up in Venda society” (1973, p. 98). Wiggins distinguishes between stages of learning: “… certainly the earlier stages of learning a new music may need a teacher who is able to adapt to the method of learning we can use most efficiently, and this learning can probably take place in a familiar institutionalised context in any country. However, there comes a point when it is important to learn the music in its traditional context, and we should be exploring ways of enabling this to happen. If we remove music from its context, we are no different from the Eurocentric explorers of the past who acquired precious artefacts and took them back to museums in their own countries” (Wiggins, 1995, p. 83).

For the student of a specific music not his own, there are indeed the challenges of multi-musicality. Until recently, it was thought impossible to achieve a professional level in world music practices. But recently, it seems ideas are beginning to shift. The 1992 ISME policy on musics of the world is still quite apprehensive about the possibility of mastering music from other cultures: “An outsider to a culture can learn to appreciate and understand its music, and even to perform it, but there may be limits to his or her ability to gain an insider’s perception. In many cases these limits are not sufficiently serious to inhibit students from achieving reasonable competence as listeners and even as performers or improvisers” (ISME, 1992; Appendix A2).

On the other hand, as early as 1959 Mantle Hood wrote that we should “eliminate the argument that an alien musical expression has cultural or racial characteristics which make it inaccessible” (1960, p. 55). He refers to the fact that in Japan, musicians of the imperial household were required to perform both *gagaku* and Western classical music (ibid.). Paradoxically, in relation to Indonesian gamelan, he states that basic musicianship is achievable, but competing with the natives is difficult (ibid., p. 58). In the end, he defines the outcome as “just as far as his objectives take him,” depending on how much time the student can spend (ibid.).

If these objectives include professional musicianship, time is proving Hood right, and sceptics wrong. After the emergence of professional white jazz musicians, the rise of Asian performers of Western classical music, there is now a generation of Westerners achieving professional standards in forms of world music. Examples can be found across musical styles: the Canadian vocalist Jon Higgins.
performing successfully in South Indian (Carnatic) classical music, Dutch Lucas van Merwijk starring in Latin ensembles, Swiss-born Andreas Gutzwiller teaching Japanese students within one of the traditional *shakuhachi* schools, Surinami-Dutch percussionist Ponda O'Bryan playing with *djembe* masters at ceremonies in West Africa, the British *rebab* player John Bailey widely embraced by Afghan expatriates living in London, and Carel Kraaijenhof making his mark as a *bandoneón* player world wide, endorsed by tango legends such as Pugliese and Piazzolla. Most of these musicians are well aware of the original and historical context of the music they have mastered, but do not seem to stress it much during performance or in teaching settings.

It is the third time in a hundred years the argument of bi-musicality has been raised. First, white jazz musicians around the middle of the last century were not always fully accepted because of their skin colour. Then, Asian performers of Western classical music were criticised for having only technique, but no feeling. Now, a generation of ‘martyrs’ for world music presents itself, while brilliant examples from the two previous categories like Benny Goodman and Yo-Yo Ma stare us in the face. The irony extends to my personal experience: while performing sitar in the West, I was secretly criticized as having very good technique, but not the real Indian feeling. When I played in India, connoisseurs and critics commented - with justification - that my expression and feeling of raga was absolutely Indian, but that I really needed to work on my technique (Times of India, Ahmedabad, 19 November 1984).

**Conclusions**

We are living in an age that has embraced the idea of cultural diversity in music education. The aims from national curriculum level to lesson plans of individual teachers include introducing pupils to music from various cultures. These essentially multicultural activities may serve multicultural, intercultural or transcultural aims as defined earlier. When considering music teaching and learning, there are five principal approaches to dealing with recontextualisation:

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

The first has obvious practical limitations. The second seems to be heavily favoured in educational thinking over the past two decades. Quite interestingly, the latter three correspond to the views of Reimer, Swanwick and Elliott as described in Chapter Two.

In order to relate the full scope of the ideas in this chapter to music education, let us look closely at a key paragraph in a recent publication on cultural diversity in music education, Volk’s *Music, Education, and Multiculturalism*:
Although many agree that teaching from a multicultural perspective can enable students to more clearly understand other people through their music, there is the concern that an inauthentic presentation of that music could confirm stereotypical ideas about these people. Indeed the entire issue of authenticity comes into question when considering that the very act of transferring music out of its cultural context and into the classroom destroys its authenticity. Proponents acknowledge this problem and say the simplest way around it are to use recordings of authentic musics and to invite community culture bearers into the classroom to present their music firsthand. (Volk, 1998, p. 9)

Although this paragraph seems to make excellent sense at first reading, from the perspective of this study we can have many comments on it. First, it seems to suggest that the purpose of dealing with world music is justified by the extra-musical purpose of “understanding other people”. Next, it mentions inauthentic presentations as confirming stereotypes. Although it is easy to call to mind situations where this happens (I remember in horror a school project in 1993 where our efforts had been to focus on the sheer musical experience of African drumming class, while the teacher had added her own choice of context by presenting the children in reed skirts with broom spears, pretending to be cooking a missionary in a large pot on stage), an ill-chosen “authentic” performance is at least as likely to confirm stereotypes. In the Netherlands during the 1980s and early 1990s, I have witnessed a number of visits to the classroom by “community culture bearers” who were often only moderately skilled in the traditions they represented, and unable to communicate across the cultural gap. This can make a North African man who appears before a classroom of Western children in a long dress with an odd-sounding instrument appear nothing beyond strange, and possibly confirming stereotypes. Such first-hand experiences might be well served by being replaced by well-conceived second-hand ones.

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

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

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

On the basis of the views and data from this chapter, it may be argued that one of the key aims of world music education is to intelligently deal with the dynamics of tradition in order to create authentic learning experiences in contemporary contexts. For the model of looking at transmission this study is developing, the choices that are made in this process and the underlying motivations are relevant to record: has the teaching situation been shaped with a static idea in mind, or a concept of constant flux; does the situation attempt to recreate an original context for the music, or does it see the music as completely recontextualised, and does the situation reflect a tendency towards reconstructing an authentic (in the sense of culturally and/or historically correct) version of the music, or does it work from the view that the music has a new identity in the new context? This leads to a combination of the three continua we have discussed in this chapter, which forms the next step towards the model we are trying to develop:

Table 3.6: Issues of Context cluster

| STATIC TRADITION | ← | CONSTANT FLUX | → |
| ORIGINAL CONTEXT | ← | COMPLETELY RECONTEXTUALISED | → |
| (RECONSTRUCTED) AUTHENTICITY | ← | NEW IDENTITY | → |

Having established various approaches to cultural diversity in Chapter One, and interpretations of Issues of Context in this chapter, the discussion can proceed to an assessment of choices made with regard to aspects of actual music making in the process of teaching and learning world music out of its original context.