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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Conclusions & Recommendations

Exploring the world of concepts and ideas behind a growing practice of cultural diversity in music education in the Netherlands from 1983 to 2003, it is possible to establish a connection between implicit and explicit values of specific musical practices and the processes of music transmission that perpetuate each tradition. A close study of choices and settings for teaching and learning provides insights, not only into technical, structural, creative and interpretative processes, but also into systems of values and beliefs, which consequently feed back into new situations for musical transmission. This becomes increasingly apparent when forms of music take root outside of their cultures of origin, and are faced with different and sometimes conflicting ideas and concepts on teaching and learning in the new environment, represented by teachers, learners, or the institutional environment. In this way, music transmission can be seen to make visible core beliefs of a tradition, like musical practice in slow motion.

This journey of discovering the diversity of practices begins with the words being used. An examination of the terminology that refers to ‘other music’ - and indeed what is considered ‘other music’ and by whom - reveals a wide range of conceptions and preconceptions about the status and qualities of various types of music. ‘Exotic,’ ‘strange,’ ‘primitive’ and ‘ethnic’ are examples of this. The term world music, coined to disperse certain preconceptions, in turn inspires new confusion and antipathy. However, it appears to be the least offensive term currently available, and acceptable as long as it acknowledges broad inclusiveness, and emphasises the dynamics of music travelling and changing. From the perspective of music transmission, these dynamics are key concepts. They are highlighted in a definition designed for educational contexts:

"world music is the phenomenon of musical repertoires, genres, styles, and instruments establishing themselves outside their cultural contexts of origin."

This raises the question of approaches to cultural diversity and its related terminology. The wide range of situations and backgrounds that can be encountered today invites consideration of the exact nature of specific instances of cultural diversity, and even more importantly, what attitudes to cultural diversity can be deducted from the views expressed or embodied in particular settings or structures. A useful framework is provided by distinguishing between a) monocultural approaches, in which the dominant culture is the only reference; b) multicultural approaches, where plurality is acknowledged but no contact or exchange is stimulated; c) intercultural approaches, which are characterised by loose contact between cultures and some effort towards mutual understanding; and d) transcultural
approaches, which represent an in-depth exchange of ideas and values. These approaches can be represented as positions on a continuum expressing levels of engagement with other cultures, from very low to intense.

The approach to cultural diversity in a society at large and its translation to music education is a considerable influence in shaping musical transmission. For organisations claiming to be intercultural in approach, from an institutional to a national level, there can be substantial discrepancy between policy and practice. Particularly in formal education, which is subject to both institutional and government traditions and regulations, across the world a tendency can be identified towards monocultural content and organisation in curriculum design and delivery. These often display underlying modernist, positivist views of a society that can be moulded, with a single truth for all, rather than a postmodern, constructivist view, which allows more room for cultural diversity.

Turning to the most relevant bodies of literature, those of ethnomusicology and music education, major evolutions in both disciplines can be traced from the nineteenth century to the present. Ethnomusicology started as the study of ‘primitive’ music and ‘Oriental’ Hochkulturen, largely seen from an evolutionary perspective, and defined by its relation to Western art music. For a considerable period, it emphasised product and analysis with measurable outcomes, inspired by insights and inventions in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. Only in the 1960s, ethnomusicology shifted to an emphasis on the relationship between music and society, albeit from a relatively static viewpoint. Since the late 1980s, aspects of change, globalisation, and popular music have been addressed. The importance of musical transmission processes is acknowledged, but to date the body of work that addresses this area of research is relatively modest from the perspective of its considerable potential for advancing understanding of the value systems underlying specific musical practices.

Formal music education as a discipline developed from the perspective of a one-sided repertoire, with initially only Western classical and some European folk music as reference. In the second half of the twentieth century awareness of the relevance of other forms of music became more prominent. This ran parallel to broader movements in (Western) societies: the East–West dialogue, the recognition of national identities, and the concept of the global village. Due to its monocultural history and background, formal music education only gradually embraced cultural diversity in any depth. From the 1980s, a substantial body of literature on the subject evolved, and at least some practice, mainly in the area of music in schools. Genre-specific teaching and learning in world music out of context of origin have remained underexposed in scholarly studies to this day, even though a substantial and diverse practice exists.
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In these and other settings, the terms 'tradition,' 'authenticity' and 'context' appear frequently. In much ethnomusicological and music education literature, the implication is that these are important and valuable. However, they are used mostly undefined and unqualified. Closer examination reveals that tradition, authenticity and context are not static concepts; they should be considered dynamic in many musical practices and their translation into education. In fact, they allow for a broad range of interpretations, to the point of being almost contradictory. Tradition, for instance, can be defined as a canon, a performance practice, a set of rules, a mechanism for handing down music, or by the role and position of a music in its cultural context. Consequently, a tradition can be defined by its static nature, or by its very capacity to change: the concept of living traditions is relevant to many forms of world music. Awareness of this paradox has implications for choices in transmission processes.

Similarly, authenticity can refer to attempts to copy or reconstruct an original as closely as possible, or to the need to be original, and thus true to one’s individual expression. Authenticity in the former sense is rarely a comprehensive reconstruction of an original; it is marked by subjective choices and conjecture. Striving for authenticity can be defined by following ancient sources, choice of instruments, composition of ensembles, recreating original settings or contexts, following established rules, or by striving for vitality of expression. This can lead to conflicting interpretations of authenticity, ranging from academic reconstruction of a work or genre to liberal interpretation of only its spirit, leading to concepts such as strategic inauthenticity. No interpretation of the concept necessarily implies successful - or unsuccessful - teaching and learning. However, it does have an impact on the choices being made in a range of areas, including teaching material, interpretation and relative emphasis on reproductive skills or creativity.

Finally, context is a crucial factor in all music making. Music takes place in context: in time, in space, in society, in ideology. Sheer formalistic and aesthetic approaches to music transmission do not cover the full reality of musical practice. However, having established that context is an undeniable presence, contemporary performance practice demonstrates that traditions can be successfully recontextualised. The 're-rooting' of numerous traditions in new cultural settings challenges the idea that (particularly world) music should always be experienced in its original context. Many musics travel remarkably well from one context to another, during which they may change considerably, or remain relatively unaltered. This should be taken into account when creating situations in which music is taught and learned. Each of these approaches can be represented on a continuum: from static tradition to constant flux, from (reconstructed) authenticity to new identity, and from original context to completely recontextualised. The position on each continuum represents an approach to a musical practice that can refer to an important force in defining the musical transmission processes, whether it is made or experienced as explicit or implicit.
The perception of what is important to learn at specific stages in any particular tradition is reflected by its relative emphasis on technical skills, repertoire, theory, creativity, expression, and values during various stages of the transmission process. Each of these represents gradations of emphasis on a continuum from tangible to intangible aspects of learning, and in fact most display an internal range of possibilities on this continuum as well. Technique can be explained and demonstrated dryly, or poetically presented; theory can be taught through explicit rules or assimilated through understanding implicit consensus amongst master musicians; values can be clearly explained or merely suggested. The methods of teaching and learning also demonstrate a vast variety and complexity. Striking features in this area are use of notation or oral methods, and analytical or holistic ways of presenting new musical concepts and material. Existing prejudices about a dichotomy between Western music education as being analytical/notation-based and world music being taught holistically/aurally cannot be maintained; most traditions in fact take a middle position.

This range of possibilities creates a new set of three continua: from analytical to holistic, from notation-based to oral, and from tangible to intangible. There is some coherence between the three continua in the teaching methods cluster: in many practices the positions on these continua correspond. However, a holistic approach to music education does not necessarily imply notation-based methods of education with an emphasis on tangible aspects. Similarly, aurally transmitted music is not always taught holistically, with more emphasis on non-tangible aspects. A leaning towards one side of the continuum is likely to lead to less emphasis on the musical or formal qualities represented on the other side of the continuum. This may simply be an expression of choices made in a particular tradition. Particularly in the case of the continuum from tangible to intangible, this is sometimes difficult to assess, however, as each of the six aspects of music learning included in this continuum may range from tangible to intangible by themselves, forming six partially overlapping continua underlying the continuum that summarises them.

The Seven-Continuum Transmission Model (SCTM)

After examining material from various sources, abstracting key issues, and testing these against a number of actual practices, it is possible to establish a descriptive model that makes visible a number of crucial choices in the organisation of music transmission. The model, based on seven continua covering approaches to learning, context and cultural diversity, provides a flexible framework for looking at teaching situations across cultures, and maps out a number of explicit and implicit choices that have been underexposed in existing methods of looking at music teaching and learning.
The model can be considered from three ‘inside’ perspectives: that of the learner, that of the teacher, and that of the teaching environment (e.g. the institution). All three are forces of considerable significance in determining the process of music transmission and learning. Finally, it can be looked at through the eyes of an outside observer, who would try to abstract from the process the result of the interplay between the three influences. It is important to note that there are no predetermined right or wrong positions on the continua; the model has at its core an absence of value judgments. However, any given situation will invite certain approaches, and the music teacher who is aware of the scope of approaches and able to vary and utilise them is more likely to be successful as a music educator.

Although the clusters are independent, some degree of coherence between the clusters can be deducted: a tendency towards the left of the continua suggests a more institutionalised/formal organisation of music transmission, while a tendency towards the right points towards more informal, community music settings.

The clearest picture can be obtained when the model is applied to a well-defined moment in education, such as a single lesson. A broader range of variation (and consequently less unambiguous positions on the continua) emerges when applied to longer processes. This corresponds with the reality of practices of teaching and learning, which tend to alternate between choices over stages of development. In all cases, observer or researcher bias plays a role, steered by the background of the user, understanding of and preconceptions about the tradition in question, and the passive or active relation to the transmission process. Although more complicated in its application, the description of longer trajectories provides researchers with the most valuable information on how musical skills and knowing are acquired within a specific tradition in a specific setting.
The model is most readily applicable to culturally diverse situations, but can be applied to a larger variety of source material. In each case, the relevance and exact definition for each of indicators (see Figure 6.2) needs to be established. Even then, the graphic representation alone is not sufficient in order to provide optimal insight into a specific situation of music transmission. Not only the position, but the reasoning behind choosing the position on the continua is crucial. For instance, this distinguishes between indifference between positions on the continuum, or two forces pulling with equal force, which could both result in a middle position. Consequently, the pattern of positions on the continuum can only give general indications: the value of the SCTM as a descriptive instrument is determined by the motivation for certain choices. Consequently, in spite of its quantitative appearance, the model emphatically remains primarily a qualitative tool.

Considering the model, its sources, and the outcome of a number of exploratory case studies, the principal conclusion is that the current practices in cultural diversity in music teaching and learning reflect a diverse phenomenon. There is no indication of an evolutionary process from ‘primitive’ world music transmission processes to ‘sophisticated’ Western ones, although world musicians entering into formal music education do express a sense of insecurity in their new environment, which may lead them to adopt the norms of what they experience as the dominant culture. Most choices that are made in each tradition, however, tend to reflect what the tradition explicitly or implicitly considers important, or the forces of changing environments in general.

In some cases, the values of Western formal music education and those of the cultural context of origin may conflict. In others, the two may inspire each other. Western music education has generated elaborate structures and analytical paths for music students, while a number of aspects of music education in various traditions of world music correspond quite closely to contemporary views on how music is learned, including stimulating students to find their own way, authentic learning, holistic approaches, and getting away from an insistence on visual sources. Settings for virtually all forms of music are changing, and these dynamics call for a reconsideration of approach and organisation of music education. Here lies a major challenge for ethnomusicologists and music educators of the future.

Recommendations

On the basis of the conclusions and the preceding discussions, we can formulate the following key recommendations to various actors in the processes of music transmission and learning, particularly music educators and ethnomusicologists:

- Music education based on a single frame of reference and the concept of a zero level at the beginning of formal music education is difficult to maintain. The change of musical reality caused by the democratisation of music and cultural diversity invites all music educators to
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Consider being more holistic in their approach, making use of the musical competencies that young students have already built up by learning holistically, having been exposed to thousands of hours of music as a matter of course in contemporary societies.

- Music education systems focusing primarily on teaching practical skills, understanding structures, or developing aesthetic awareness may need to take into account that contextual factors (including recontextualisation) play a significant role in the learning process. Music making reflects a number of crucial choices in actual musical sound and context, and music education both reflects and influences these.

- Cultural diversity presents major new possibilities, but also major challenges to music educators and their environment. Ignoring the dynamics of contemporary contexts is likely to affect the success of music education from the perspective of clients and providers of funds, and may ultimately lead to the loss of the institutional or financial basis for existence. It stands to reason that those responsible for music transmission at least develop sensitivity and define their position towards the choices as indicated in the seven continua.

- Organisations responsible for music education can use the seven continuum model to gauge whether the way they organise teaching and learning corresponds to the missions they have defined for themselves, their teachers, their students and their funding bodies: as keepers of a tradition, providers to specific niche markets, or as active players in the entire gamut of complex musical realities of the twenty-first century.

- Having established that many crucial aspects of music learning take place in the realm of intangibles and holistic learning, the increasing insistence of funding bodies on measurable outcomes per well-defined module should be treated with extreme caution, and countered with intelligent analyses of the core qualities of musicians as creative practitioners, and how they acquire their skills. The SCTM may assist in making this point convincingly.

- Given that one of the aims of ethnomusicology is to gain the best possible understanding of the many musical traditions of the world, and the processes of teaching and learning disclose much of the otherwise implicit values and beliefs on music, the system of transmission for each of these should be part of the serious study of any music, including Western classical music. SCTM may serve as a format to assist shaping such research, and stimulate its application across cultures.
There are indications that processes of musical transmission and learning may be of considerable significance in the development of particular styles and genres over time and place. The SCTM may help structure research on processes of musical change.

Considering the dynamics of music in terms of globalisation, with the associated challenges to simple relations between music and locality and context, ethnic affiliation, tradition and authenticity, and transmission processes, the case that was first propagated by Charles Seeger in the 1970s to reclaim the term musicology for what is now generally referred to as ethnomusicology increasingly gains credibility. The branches of musicology that have laboured under this incorrect labelling for over a century may then henceforth be identified as ‘Western historical musicology,’ ‘Western music analysis,’ or other suitable epithets.

Further Research

From the text, recommendations and conclusions a number of suggestions for further research that are beyond the scope of this study can be defined:

- The full extent of intersubjectivity of the SCTM from the perspective of different researchers, observers and participants in relation to diverse practices and settings of music transmission and learning needs to be established by conducting additional empirical research. This will clearly delineate the quantitative potential and limitations of the model.

- In the realm of culturally diverse projects, having seen that the seven continuua can be approached from different perspectives by the three main forces in the process of musical transmission (learner, teacher, and organiser of the teaching environment), research is needed to demonstrate whether less successful instances of music transmission and learning can be explained from a mismatch in the views between two or more of these ‘actors,’ and whether successful transmission correlates with harmonious visions.

- Further research is needed to establish the exact correlation between the various continuua of SCTM, and how what the represent can influence the process of acquiring musical competency in various stages. In Chapter Six, some indication is given on the connection between the continua, with the left hand side of the continuum more easily associated with formal music education situations, while the right hand side would represent informal music education. A broader study should provide deeper insight into these and other correlations.
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- Additional research may consider the relationship of the continua in the SCTM and those expressed or implied in (music) education, such as teacher-centred versus student-centred learning, or positivist versus constructivist approaches. The relationship of the continua of the SCTM with the 'dimensions' of cultural diversity established by research in corporate environments merits further investigation as well.

- Initial research suggests substantial importance of holistic and aural learning, even in traditions that use notation extensively. If we accept on the basis of the evidence from predominantly holistically transmitted traditions that oral/holistic learning is an important force in acquiring musical skills and knowledge, then it must be taken into account in the design and assessment of all music transmission. It would be of great interest to music education at large to determine how much of learning, for instance, Western classical music, can be described in these terms, and takes place informally through conscious or subconscious exposure.

- This study represents a step towards a fuller understanding of systems of musical transmission and their importance to diverse practices. In its 1992 Policy on Musics of the World's Cultures, the International Society for Music Education recommends: "Existing systems of music education may be reviewed and evaluated as to their efficacy and relevance in the teaching of specific musical cultures." With the model that results from this study, this process can perhaps be organised more expeditiously, and include the transmission of western art music in schools, music schools, and conservatoires.

- One of the key issues to be researched as a follow-up of this thesis is how and whether musical traditions change when the system of musical transmission is changed, either consciously or by any form of recontextualisation. This does not only form an exciting area of research, but also one that is eminently practically useful, as institutes for music education are in the constant process of monitoring their efficacy, often without being sufficiently informed about the consequences of their decisions.

- Related to this, and also beyond the scope of this work, is the relation between quality criteria and what is being taught. In looking at various systems of musical transmission, there are indications that in some cases there seems to be a mismatch between the two. In analytical situations, the intangibles tend to be underemphasised, while in holistic situations, the underlying structures often remain unclear.
In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that this study, exploring a number of key concepts, ideas and practices of cultural diversity in music teaching and learning from a new perspective, and trying to develop a descriptive model to make these visible in relation to specific situations or moments of musical transmission, will aid in furthering the discussion on teaching and learning music in various settings, and stimulate more dialogue between musicians, music educators and ethnomusicologists from many different areas of expertise. From a global perspective, music teaching and learning appears to be at a crossroads, and various actors in this field can either try to withdraw into seemingly safe fortresses (in thought or stone), or embrace the postmodern complexities and challenges of contemporary cultural realities, and move forward through exchange on the basis of a sense of equality and open dialogue between music educators, (ethno)musicologists, and musicians from all over the world.