

Enhancing Curriculums with World Music

As always I am looking forward to the beginning of a new school year. I am excited to meet new students, re-connect with returning students, I will be teaching a new course, and once again rehearsing and exploring new music. I would like to extend to you my best wishes for another exciting and rewarding year in 2015-16.

It has been a fairly busy summer. We once again attended the NAfME National Assembly in Washington DC and met with legislators from Missouri. The re-authorization of ESEA has begun and debate continues. Your MMEA Board has been working on developing our annual In-Service in January and I am excited to announce the development of a Mentoring Conference in October for new teachers. Please see Steve Litwiller's column to learn more about this conference for new teachers.

Over the last couple of years we have established the practice of giving each MSM a focus with the intent of offering individual insight and ideas for each topic from the members of the MMEA Board and Advisory Council. This first issue has a global or world music focus. I hope that within these pages you will find some inspiration to explore and consider incorporating world music in your teaching this year.

Our programming and curriculum development is for the most part centered on a western Euro-American collection of literature for study and performance. This is a generalization of course and this practice must remain as the basis for our curriculum development. By stressing the importance and perhaps the "superiority" of the Euro-American system, we have downgraded the importance of other means of musical expression. Our students need exposure to a diverse offering of musical styles that can be found in the music of other cultures. This exposure will also help students understand that many areas of the world have music that is as sophisticated as their own and equally valid ways of creating and constructing music.

In Western societies, second only to the family, the school is often considered the most important socializing agent. Schools in the United States are microcosms of different cultural groups comprising our society. Recognizing the diverse musical cultures of our students and their world is one more key to the survival of music education as an essential element of learning and life.

Programming good repertoire that represents an authentic reproduction of the music of any culture is the real challenge. As a band director I have always been so impressed with the global approach to repertoire that vocal ensembles have incorporated into their programming and curriculum. Inspired by listening to the great concerts presented by John Smith at Fort Zumwalt South for so many years and now the incredibly creative programming of the UMSL choirs under the direction of Jim Henry I searched the band repertoire to find authentic music that would be representative of other cultures around the world that I could add to my programming. It soon became apparent that this was going to be difficult. Not having a text to carry the ensemble and lend some authenticity to the piece we were sincerely challenged. Our twelve tone system and rhythmic organization immediately made many pieces out of our reach. With the help of Dr. Robert Nordman, Des Lee Professor of Music Education at UMSL, I developed a list of pieces that with adjustments could be performed by bands at different age levels adding wonderful

programming options and giving students exposure to quality literature based on traditions of various cultures of the world. This search although at first daunting turned into a challenge and a great deal of fun. I have posted my findings at: <http://www.mmea.net/content/mmea-new-teacher-resource-0> There you will find “*World Music for Concert Band*” and “*World Music Repertoire List*.” The repertoire list contains eleven pages of pieces listed by title, composer, publisher and grade level.

Now some of these pieces need research and adjustment to be more authentic. This is a very important step in the presentation. I found many percussion parts that needed to be rewritten. I had to adjust the form and I had to teach tone production techniques that are not traditional to western music. These challenges were motivating and the students enjoyed the variety and challenge of the new technique and approach.

There is not room here for many examples but I would like to highlight two that I had a great deal of success with. *African Spirit Dance, John O’Reilly, Alfred Pub., grade 2*. Fun chart with well scored wind parts. When I listened to the piece it sounded Latin not African. I ask my colleague, Matt Henry, UMSL Percussion and the most knowledgeable person I know on the music of African and Latin cultures. His immediate response was to give me appropriate percussion parts that supported the Afro-Cuban elements implied by the harmonic structure. The piece came to life!! I have used it on two occasions with middle school honors bands with huge success and great audience response.

Impression of Japan, James Barnes, Southern Music, grade 5. Challenging wind and percussion parts. Three movements that represent various geographic or cultural aspects of Japan. I invited a Japanese exchange student in to translate some documents I found in support of the third movement, Asakusa Matsuri (Festival in Asakusa). When he heard the music he got up out of his seat, walked over and stood by me and said “I have been to this parade!” One of the tunes was a rendition of a traditional melody associated with the region where a parade as part of this festival is held. There was a percussion segment that was to represent Taiko drumming. We used old bass drums with one head only, dropped the pitch and tried to simulate authentic Taiko drumming technique. I invited the Japanese student to introduce the piece at the concert in both his native language and English. He brought many of his friends with him to the concert.

My list does not include jazz charts that ask for various Latin or Afro-Cuban grooves but I found these charts to have the same challenges in terms of altering the rhythm section parts from what is written to be more authentic to the feel that is intended. Once again I had to call friends for help and do some research into what would be more appropriate bass and drum patterns.

The focus of multicultural music education in the future needs to be on process, not product. We are faced with practices that limit our authenticity. But we can also be a resource for all of our teaching colleagues and encourage music as a basic tool that enriches learning in all subject areas. Work in cooperation with the teachers in your school and present global learning units for your students.

“If music is found in a diversity of music cultures, then music is inherently multicultural. If music is inherently multicultural, then music education ought to be multicultural in essence.” (David Elliot, Music Matters, 1995).

As I mentioned earlier we are busy preparing for our annual In-Service, our theme for 2016 is “Creativity and Innovation.” It is our goal to raise awareness of new ideas and trends that will add an element innovation to your classroom and encourage creative approaches to teaching and learning. I hope you will be able to join in January.

It is important that we no longer think of America as a “melting pot.” The United States is best described as a mosaic of various ethnic communities that contribute to the national culture as they maintain distinct identities. The United States is probably the most multicultural nation on earth. American society is constantly changing. Trends demonstrate that we are becoming more diverse ethnically, racially, socioeconomically, religiously, and musically.

Global and comprehensive curricular plans may center upon an experience (a specific piece of music, a book, a performance practice, an art related project) and allow students to follow the themes, strands, and splintering’s individually and collectively. I found it to be interesting and I learned a great deal!

Census reports project that what we used to label as minority, students other than white, will comprise approximately half of all school age children by 2025. The largest growing segment is Hispanic with one in three U.S. residents being Hispanic by 2050.

Site examples of concert band that needed adjustments to written.

Site examples of cultural reference and study.

The people of the United States today are more concerned with humanistic and cultural matters than ever before, because we are, in fact more diverse and pluralistic. As music educators we need to develop our understanding of multicultural music, particularly at the senior high school level. It is not only important to education, but it is important to teaching and learning in the twenty-first century, and to tolerance, understanding, worthiness and well-being, in fact to the very survival of schools as viable institutions of our multicultural society.

Multicultural music education in the future must focus on the process, not the product. We must no longer be self-serving in our approach to learning. Music needs to be integrated into all subjects and music educators must serve as resources and motivators to their teaching colleagues so the arts may become a basic tool for all learning. Arts Integration!

Exposure to a wide variety of musical sounds from all over the world expands their sound palette. This exposure will also help students understand that many areas of the world have music that is as sophisticated as their own and equally valid ways of creating and constructing music. This exposure will also increase their ability to perform, listen and appreciate many types of music.

Sample project: Select a musical tradition originating elsewhere in the world. You must have music that you can perform or recordings that you want to use, i.e.; West African drumming, Brazilian samba, music of Bosnia, etc. Contact and correspond with people in the place of the music's origin, or someone you may know that lives in your community from the source place of the music to be performed or studied and enter into a dialogue with them. Invite them to class,

visit their community. Ask them to share insight of this music, and their homeland. Visit their places of worship, if allowed.

Music is one of the few human phenomena shared in every culture around the world. (Nettl 1956).

A significant piece of education legislation, Goals 2000, gave support to multicultural education. Goal 3 of the Goals 2000 Educate America Act of 1994 states “All students will be knowledgeable about the diverse cultural heritage of this Nation and about the world community.”

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Whenever and wherever humans have existed music has existed also. (Reimer 2000) Because of its universal role in transmitting cultural and musical knowledge, music education must also be a global phenomenon.

I have used global in reference to international or world music. We could also use the word in reference to programs that are comprehensive in scope. Including experiences that cross aural, visual, and kinesthetic modalities, a global approach to learning and instruction. Global and comprehensive curricular plans may center upon an experience (a specific piece of music, a book, a museum trip, a performance, an art project) and allow students to follow the themes,

strands, and splintering's individually and collectively. There are pieces of music within our western traditions that lend themselves to this in obvious ways. Repertoire based on multicultural elements will work as well but require additional research and means to authenticate.

Schools in the United States are required to manage an increasingly changing and diverse student population reflective of population trends across America in general. An implication of classroom diversity is that for many students school will be their only exposure to cultures different from their own. A primary objective of multicultural music education is to provide musical experiences that "encourage and develop understanding and sensitivity to people from a broad spectrum of ethnic backgrounds." (Anderson and Campbell).