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Toward a Sociology of Music Curriculum Integration

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Toward a Sociology of Music Curriculum Integration

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In this article, an analogy is drawn between processes of land-grabbing or land enclosures and music education professionalization. It is suggested that specializations in musicing and music teaching serve to discourage participation or create musical helplessness on the part of those who don't view themselves as "musically inclined." The author further recommends that music curriculum integration be considered a process of bringing things back together that shouldn't have been divided in the first place, and stresses the importance of everyday musics and musicing in countering musical enclosure and in empowering generalist elementary teachers to include musical experiences in their classrooms and curriculum.

Keywords: music, curriculum, integration, enclosure, specialization

To grow garden worms, you till a two-foot wide row through an alfalfa field and cover it with chopped hay. Over time the worms gravitate to this food source and multiply. To harvest the worms, you take a garden fork, kneel by the row, move the hay to the side, turn the soil, break up the soil with your hands, pick out the worms, replace the soil, move the next bit of hay, turn the next bit of soil, and so on—moving down the row and eventually filling a gallon can with about 2000 worms. When the digging's really good, you can fill a can in an hour, or maybe two. I'm sure many other processes work for raising garden worms, but this is how it worked on the farm where I spent a good portion of my youth, kneeling in the field, digging worms day after day, along with my brothers and sisters. We did this out of necessity, in order to help support the family.

I share this account to illustrate my personal orientation to and experience with being "down-to-earth," a central theme of this essay; to this day the feel and smell of freshly-turned soil brings a sense of wholeness and authenticity to my life. As with everyone else, I am a product of my upbringing; I "come by my worldview honestly." Given that all sociologies of music education are socially constructed, this sort of autobiographical disclosure, I feel, is as vital as it is disregarded. In my case, concrete experience with the earth and with a class of farmers living close to the earth, I believe, undergirds my aversion to pretentiousness, falseness, and hierarchy. From this perspective no one is better than

anyone else, value is placed on practicality as opposed to “highfalutin” theories or ideals, and *the commons*—a focus on commonly shared places and traditions—is an anchoring disposition.

This is an essay about music curriculum integration, a topic that is always and necessarily about people. For it is people who legislate, create, teach, and learn music and other school subjects. Music curriculum integration, then, is also always social and sociological. In other words, it bears the logic of the society in which it is conceived and enacted. By curriculum integration I mean the combination of music with one or more other curricular domains (e.g. language arts, science, math, social studies, and so forth) within complex learning experiences. Of course, our lived realities are such that learning is already naturally complex and integrated. In this light, curricular integration can be viewed as a process of *re-combining* domains of human experience and knowledge that probably should not have been separated in the first place. At any rate, I argue that music curriculum integration ought to be down-to-earth—rooted in authentic (naturally occurring as opposed to technically constructed), complex, everyday musical practices and the immediate and long-term needs of children. As a teacher of educators who teaches arts integration for the elementary classroom, I will explore how this perspective can be particularly empowering for prospective elementary classroom teachers filling the role of generalists—teaching all subjects versus those who specialize in one, music in particular.

Enclosing the Commons

In the words of agrarian writer Wendell Berry (1977): “While we live our bodies are moving particles of earth, joined inextricably both to the soil and to the bodies of other living creatures” (97). The “earth is what we all have in common . . . it is what we are made of and we live from, and . . . we therefore cannot damage it without damaging those with whom we share it” (Berry 2002, 118). In other words, we thrive only to the extent to which we work *with* the earth and *with* each other—in a spirit of humility, cooperation, and gratitude. This perspective is akin to the Gaia hypothesis, outlined by Estelle Jorgensen (1997) as follows:

Among the various statements of this worldview, the Gaia hypothesis posits that all things on planet earth comprise part of an interconnected dynamic system in delicate balance, where the whole transcends the sum of its parts. Applied figuratively in the social realm, this hypothesis challenges the rule of technology, positivism, and rationality and posits the complementarity of the arts, the validity of nonscientific ways of knowing, and the importance of imagination and intuition. Its concern is with process as well as product, with cooperation along with competition, and it suggests that feminine in addition to masculine ways of knowing enhance the richness of human society and personal well-being. (3)

Building on concepts of cooperation and conservation, Theobald (1997) introduced the term *intradependence* meaning “to exist by virtue of necessary relations *within a place*” (7). Similarly, Tönnies developed the concept of *Gemeinschaft*—community in a pre-modern, pre-industrial sense—a place in which forgiveness, patience, and cooperation are key necessities (see Bates 2013). Foster (2000) suggests that this interrelationship between earth and society is dialectical or reflexive. He quotes Caudwell’s assertion that humans

cannot change Nature without changing themselves. The full understanding of this mutual interpenetration of reflexive movement of [humanity] and Nature, mediated by the necessary and developing relations known as society, is the recognition of necessity, not only in Nature but in ourselves and therefore society. Viewed objectively this active subject-object relation is science, viewed subjectively it is art; but as consciousness emerging in active union with practice it is simply concrete living—the whole process of working, feeling, thinking, and behaving like a human individual in one world of individuals and Nature. (cited in Foster 2000, 12).

Down-to-earth theories such as these develop in reaction to globalizing and capitalistic effects of *Gesellschaft*, or modern society, wherein a sense of community or rootedness tends to be replaced with efficiency and where cooperation is often supplanted by competition and control. On the one hand, applying Heidegger’s (1977) distinction, human action consists in *bringing-forth*, “to care for and maintain,” and, on the other hand, *challenging-forth*, “which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such” (6). The earth, then, becomes an object of human exploitation and accumulation; greed and alienation replace the intradependence of the commons.

But man following his own sensuality [becomes] a devourer of the creatures and an encloser, not content that another should enjoy the same privilege as himself, but encloseth all from his brother; so that all the land, trees, beasts, fish, fowl, etc., are enclosed into a few mercenary hands, and all the rest deprived and made their slaves. (cited in Berens 2006)

This quotation reflects the sentiments of the Diggers, a group led by Gerrard Winstanley in 17th century England who gained notoriety in attempts to reclaim, from the English gentry, land previously held in common. The enclosure process (carefully analyzed by Marx in 1867) continues today throughout the world and meets with similar resistance or repression. The following, for example, is from the Zapatista movement:

Capitalism is most interested in merchandise, because when it is bought or sold, profits are made. And then capitalism turns everything into merchandise, it makes merchandise of people, *of nature*, of culture, of history, of conscience. According to capitalism, everything must be able to be bought and sold. And it hides

everything behind the merchandise, so we don't see the exploitation that exists. (Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle 2015, 71, italics added)

The modern enclosure movement (*land-grabbing*) “creates specific kinds of property dynamics, namely dispossession of land, water, forests and other common property resources; their concentration, privatization and transaction as corporate (owned or leased) property; and in turn the transformation of agrarian labour regimes” (White et al. 2012, 620). These arrangements for land acquisition and exploitation are necessarily social, reflexively arising from a complex of social pathologies—greed, selfishness, and pride—and shaping social structures.

Key characteristics of enclosure include the following:

1. *Privatization*. The commons—the shared heritage of the many—are appropriated as private resources for the few. The earth becomes a commodity for exploitation and profit. Barriers are constructed to protect the land from the common people. Property and resources are redistributed from the poor to the rich.
2. *Displacement*. Of those who are pushed off the land, some are hired back as wage laborers—*human resources*. Most, however, become refugees, seeking subsistence elsewhere, typically gravitating to urban centers. Alienated from what is familiar and traditional, they become strangers. If allowed back onto the land, it is only under conditions set by the owners, typically for wage labor.
3. *Standardization*. The land is consolidated into larger holdings for the sake of efficiency. These large systems are too large to be managed in traditional and reflexive ways; they have to be managed according to generalizable scientific standards.
4. *Stratification*. Efficiency necessitates specialized roles arranged hierarchically from management to workers, and including guards or gatekeepers. Workers are alienated from control of and full benefit from their own efforts. Work is *specialized* and participants generally compete for promotions and other rewards.
5. *Degradation*. Enclosure degrades both the land and quality of life—process as well as product. As people are dispersed to urban areas, true communities are lost. High levels of refinement and standardization and wide distribution decrease the quality of products and harm the natural environment with artificiality via synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

The foregoing discussion parallels Weberian social closure theory wherein “groups try to monopolize advantages and maximize their rewards by closing off opportunities to outsiders they define as inferior or ineligible” (Weeden 2002, n.p.). Professional occupations, such as that of educator, are maintained through exclusionary practices such as educational credentialing to “monitor entry into

occupations” and thereby limiting the supply of professionals, licensing to ensure that music educators maintain the “highest” standards for musicality and professional conduct, and through occupational associations that advocate for the continuance and necessity of the professional and optimal rewards for professionals (Weeden 2002). The *enclosure* metaphor, I feel, adds a richness to this theory, especially in the field of music, embracing more completely the idea of *the commons* and thereby the injustice of barring people from free participation.

Musical Enclosure

In this section, I will consider how formal, institutional music education—school music—might aptly be viewed as a form of musical and cultural enclosure. This analysis stems from a deep conviction that musicing—singing, playing musical instruments, dancing—is our common heritage—our human birthright. In other words, musicing grows from shared cultural grounds. Ethnomusicologists have given accounts of primary or pre-modern cultures wherein music is a common practice in which all community members participate. Illustrative of this are John Blacking’s classic analysis of the Venda in *How Musical is Man?* (1973) and Christopher Small’s discussion of music in Bali in *Music, Society, Education* (1980). These types of participatory music engagements continue in modern societies as well. Turino (2008) provides the following:

[T]hroughout the . . . world, there are a multitude of music-dance activities that do not involve formal presentations . . . or recording and concert ticket sales. These other activities are more about *the doing* and social interaction than about creating and artistic product or commodity. Singing in church and playing music at home with friends “just for fun” are common examples . . . but there are many other pockets of participatory music making and dance ranging from contra, salsa, hip hop, and swing dancing to drum circles, garage rock bands, bluegrass or old-time jams, and community singing. . . . Regardless of how important these activities are to the participants, I have frequently heard such people say, “But I am not *really* a musician,” because of the broader system of value that holds professionalism as the standard (25).

A clear gap exists between school music, at least in North America where presentational performance is standard, and outside-of-school musicing, characterized by a more extensive array of possibilities for participatory performance. This gap constitutes a major contradiction in modern school music. The most common explanation for the gap is institutional stasis or inertia—that societies have changed and institutions have for various reasons been unwilling to change along with them. I think there’s much more to it. I’m not sure there *ever* was a time when school music was completely a reflection of outside-of-school musicing or the everyday musical needs or desires of the general populace. In fact, I

believe that the gap has *always* been an essential catalyst in establishing music as a separate and specialized school subject and in maintaining the professional status of music educators. If you are going to enclose something, you've got to build your fence high, sturdy, and intimidating. By making music extra-special, in other words, one can protect it from the "commoners."

To illustrate this point, consider a specific socially constructed artifact of modern society, *The Incredibles*, a Disney movie wherein a family of superheroes (patterned after the typical white, American, middle class family—my family loves this movie, by the way) is tasked with combatting Syndrome. Syndrome isn't a natural superhero though: he developed technologies that allowed him to mimic the innate superior capabilities of "true" superheroes; he's an imposter! His ultimate aim is to market his super technologies so that everyone can be incredible.

Syndrome: Oh, I'm real. Real enough to defeat you! And I did it without your precious gifts, your oh-so-special powers. I'll give them heroics. I'll give them the most spectacular heroics the world has ever seen! And when I'm old and I've had my fun, I'll sell my inventions so that everyone can have powers. Everyone can be super! And when everyone's super . . . [chuckles evilly] no one will be."¹

"When everyone's super . . . *no one will be.*" This nightmarish egalitarian prospect threatens the American middle and upper class meritocratic consciousness of which school music is an extension. To preserve school music teaching as a profession it is necessary to exclude others from full participation. Rather than a common heritage, music must be considered a specialized skill developed by the well-resourced few. If everyone had the skills, then no one would be special. School music, then, is focused on select genres of music (quality standards) actualized in presentational performance (performance standards) for which rigorous formal instruction is required, rather than more natural unfoldings of musicianship through everyday musical experiencing. School music, in order to maintain the gap, must be situated *as Music*—music proper (with a capital M). This positioning can often be rather overt. For example, a colleague of mine in a rural university expressed her wish in faculty meeting that all students at the university should be involved with music, meaning somehow involved with the university music program by taking music courses or participating in ensembles. In actuality, the musical involvements of most if not all of the university students could readily be observed, even though they had little or nothing to do with the university music department or its cultural values. In fact, in my American Popular Music course, in which I taught large groups of students from across campus, classroom discussions typically revealed a wide array of participatory musicings. Another colleague (it may have been in the same faculty meeting in fact) complained of having to drive all the way to Kansas City for any type of

musical “culture.” However, contrary to the claim that “everything’s up to date in Kansas City” (from the musical *Oklahoma*), musical culture can be found everywhere. Yet, populist or diverse definitions for music and culture are an affront to music teaching and learning, as special, and thereby a threat to the institution of school music.

I have had the opportunity to observe, within another art form, a specialization process perhaps in its earlier stages. This year I chaired the Weber State University Storytelling Festival, a three-day event where thousands of elementary children listen to national and regional professional storytellers. What could be more common than storytelling? As I understand it, our aim with this festival, now in its twentieth year, is to empower children and families to share stories. We work closely with members of the Utah Storytelling Guild whose goal, on the other hand, is to elevate the “art of storytelling.” One day I said to one of my professional storyteller friends, “Everyone’s a storyteller.” I was thinking of my experiences telling stories to my children and of my parents and grandparents sharing stories from their lives. My friend said, “Oh, no. Sure, everyone tells stories, but not everyone is a storyteller.” If this is the social trajectory for storytelling, I wonder if at some point in the future people will apologize for telling stories, as they often do with music: “I just dabble in this; I’m not *really* a storyteller.”

School music in North America has already traveled down this road to cultural enclosure. It discourages participation; in effect, only a select few are let back in and then only on specific terms. In America, prior to the advent of public education, itinerant music teachers traveled the country developing temporary community singing schools eventually centered on the singing of shape notes. This participatory form of musicing spread throughout large portions of the country. In the words of George Pullen Jackson (1965), “The shape-note method fostered by the masters was ideally suited, in its simplicity, to the crude and musically traditionless settlers . . .” Now, I doubt the settlers were musically tradition-less; the point is that shape note singing became a popular participatory practice.

I’m most interested in what happened next with the entrance of the Better Music Boys: Lowell Mason, the father of American music education, his brother Timothy, and others. Timothy Mason

pilgrimaged from the musically urbane Boston—with its Handel and Haydn Society [and] its Boston Academy of Music—to Cincinnati. . . . There he found everybody singing and enjoying the Billings and Company “fuguing songs” and all the rest of the old-time, native New England singing-school stock-in-trade, and using books printed in the popular shape-notes. Burning with musical-missionary zeal . . . he set about compiling an orthodox instruction and song book that was to counteract all this tonal paganism. (Jackson 1965, 17)

Reports are that the “success” of the Better Music Movement had an overall negative effect on musical participation. In the following quote, Jackson reflects on a prior musicologist’s assessment of the movement’s overall impact:

I wish to recall Gould’s disappointment that this reform, which seemed to promise so many blessings to the people as a whole, failed to keep its promise. The one great purpose of learning to sing in those times was that congregational singing should improve. And Gould felt he had to admit that in 1853, despite Mason, Beecher, Colburn, Pestalozzi, et al, congregational singing was poorer and church choirs were smaller. The music historian did not place the blame, but one can sense his feeling that the masses had had their own music taken away, and that they had not yet been able to assimilate the Better Music which was foreign to them. He might have recalled also that the singing-school masters and other natives had made their own songs, and that now the Better Music of the noted composers had made them first conscious of their own deficiencies and then unproductive, *ashamed of home-made music*. (Jackson 1965, 21, emphasis added)

This effect is alive and well today with my students who are preparing to become general elementary classroom teachers. They aren’t music majors and most are very upfront in claiming that they aren’t musicians—that they aren’t “musically inclined.” Further discussions reveal that it was often an experience with school music that led them to believe that they weren’t musical. They were put on the spot or they failed an audition. The biggest challenge with teaching music integration has been overcoming this musical helplessness. *My aim, subsequently, with my students, is to increase awareness of their musical birthrights and the injustices of musical enclosure in hopes that this realization will empower them to engage their own students in singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments—to take back what is rightfully theirs.*

In other words, I try to involve them in a form of resistance, akin to what the Diggers attempted in 1649 as discussed in the following song lyric:

World Turned Upside Down (Diggers)

(Leon Rosselson, as recorded by Billy Bragg)

In 1649
 To St George's Hill
 A ragged band they called the Diggers
 Came to show the people's will
 They defied the landlords
 They defied the laws
 They were the dispossessed
 Reclaiming what was theirs

 We come in peace, they said
 To dig and sow
 We come to work the land in common
 And to make the waste land grow

This earth divided
We will make whole
So it can be
A common treasury for all.²

In everyday life, music is already integrated and shared in common. As members of this musical commons, elementary classroom teachers, I believe, are in a much better position than musically degreed (professionalized) elementary music specialists, to teach and integrate music in elementary classrooms. The musical understandings for which formal training is usually required—music theory, reading staff notation, specialized terminology, high levels of performance—are simply not needed in elementary music and can often lead to less-than-optimal instruction. For instance, I have observed “highly qualified” music specialists spend entire class periods teaching Italian words for tempo and dynamics or note names on a staff. Instead, the children could be involved in more complex engagements such as folk dances, sing-alongs, and traditional singing games—all of which can be led by anybody with general musical knowledge or sometimes just the ability to play an audio or video recording and manage a classroom full of students. Even when the specialist teacher uses these traditional participatory musical activities, it is often with the intent of directing students toward an element of classical music performance or appreciation. Musicing with the generalist teacher, in other words, will likely be much more down-to-earth than with the specialist. Plus, the do-it-yourself example set for children by a supposedly not musically inclined teacher potentially sends other important messages: music is something everyone can do, you don’t have to be helpless, you can do things even if you aren’t a specialist.

Drunken Sailor: An Example

Many of my students already know *Drunken Sailor* when I introduce it in my Elementary Integrated Arts Methods course. In the United States, this enduring Sea Chanty was popularized by Burl Ives in the the 1956 album, *Down to the Sea in Ships*.³ I include a singing game drawn from Mary Helen Richards’ book, *Let’s Do It Again*, and provide my teachers with a youtube⁴ recording of the dance. I intentionally made these videos feel less-than-professional and informal, hoping to avoid creating the types of barriers I have been discussing. So, even the most musically intimidated teacher, given the required technology, can access this video and share it with a classroom of students. By itself, this musical engagement whereby students sing and dance addresses much in the music curriculum, exploring beat, rhythm, and melody. I also have my classes create new ways to do the dance as well as additional verses for the song, thereby expanding the experience to include musical creativity, thereby addressing much more of the music

and dance core curriculum standards. Finally, we discuss the historical and social contexts for the song, thereby addressing even more standards. This type of experience, due to its comprehensive and complex nature and possibilities, in fact, forms the core of typical North American elementary general music methods or approaches (e.g. Education Through Music and the Kodály approach).

Central to my argument here is the fact that *Drunken Sailor* is accessible for generalist music teachers. A minimum of musical skills are required especially if the teacher opts to use an audio/visual recording to teach the song and dance. Because many of my students already know the tune, it takes very little time to teach this song and dance. As teachers, we brainstorm a variety of “good things” that can come from this experience, such as physical coordination, social interaction, and creativity. Then, we explore curricular connections. As described above, social studies connections are readily apparent. In fact, music is integral to social studies in that all groups of people throughout history and throughout the world have their own associated musics and musicings. So, this connection is a “no brainer” and a natural part of the participatory musicing. Language arts, too, come into play through the song lyrics and through contextualizing. In addition to listening and speaking (singing), students create their own verses (writing). These new verses can be compiled and shared (reading). Students might also research more about this song or sea chanties in general (reading informational text).

I have also used the tune from *Drunken Sailor* to introduce information about the three states of matter:

We all know three states of matter
 We all know three states of matter
 We all know three states of matter
 Solid, liquid, gas.
 Water is matter, water is liquid.
 Rocks are matter, rocks are solid.
 Oxygen is matter, oxygen is gas.
 Solid, liquid, gas.

The second verse is done as a question and answer (call and response?) with the teacher or a group of students posing an item or substance for the class to classify. This science extension is not my favorite, I will admit, but it works and is an example of a very common type of integration in which generalist teachers engage—placing curricular information to familiar tunes—a very *common* memorization technique. A less contrived form of integration is to extend the application within language arts by changing the adjective prior to “sailor.” In fact, the Backyardigans use “scurvy pirate”⁵ and when I explored this with my

daughter's third grade class, her teacher was not keen on the "drunken" idea and so I had the students come up with their own adjectives and subsequent verses.

Again, the key to these activities is that they seem accessible to generalist teachers. Plus, they address the typical music standards (singing, moving, contextualizing, creating) in important ways, as well as core curriculum standards in language arts and social studies, and can be extended to address information and concepts in other subject areas such as science. I also encourage elementary teachers to introduce popular song lyrics with their students, especially in upper elementary grades, using these lyrics in the same ways as other poetic texts. Students can also explore and graph (math) musical preferences within their class, extended family, and community. For all of these types of integration, serious music learning is taking place in down-to-earth, common musical practices.

Coda

Christopher Small (1980) had this to say:

Music is too important to be left to the musicians, and in recognizing this fact we strike a blow at the experts' domination, not only of our music but also of our very lives. If it is possible to control our own musical destiny, provide our own music rather than leaving it altogether to someone else to provide, then perhaps some of the other outside expertise that controls our lives can be brought under our control also. (214)

When I was 19, I served for two years as a Mormon missionary in Denmark and then taught for three years at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. I took that same missionary zeal, now applied to the "gospel" of classical music, with me into my job as a music specialist in a small rural town. I lived right there in town and, in one of many attempts to increase classical music literacy and appreciation, traveled from house to house to teach private piano lessons after school. Sometimes I would have my piano students show off their talents by performing in one of their elementary music classes during the school day. One day, after one of my second graders played a piece in class that we had been working on at home, one of the other students who couldn't afford lessons asked if she could have a turn. "Sure, why not," I said, with a shrug. She improvised a short piece. Then another student asked for a turn . . . and then another until most of the class had played something. They didn't just bang on the piano either, but made up short pieces with melodic, rhythmic, and dynamic variation. In a sense, they helped me come back down to earth that day by reminding me that musicing is for everybody—a sacred birthright.

About the Author

Vincent Bates teaches elementary arts integration, secondary student teaching seminar, and values education at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. Most of his scholarship relates to social class and rural music education. He is currently serving as editor of *Action, Criticism, and Theory in Music Education*, and recently completed a two-year term as chair of the Weber State University Storytelling Festival, one of the largest storytelling festivals in the world to feature youth storytellers.

Notes

¹ <http://www.imdb.com/character/ch0003832/quotes>

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwQwA_kFxoE

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFwpWvG4ZVw>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTsHaXtPrys>

⁵ http://backyardigans.wikia.com/wiki/A_Scurvy_Pirate

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