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"Just Keep Going, Stay Together, and Sing OUT." Learning Byzantine Music in an Informal and Situated Community of Practice

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"Just Keep Going, Stay Together, and Sing OUT." Learning Byzantine Music in an Informal and Situated Community of Practice

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This project examines the communal process of music learning as it occurs in a Byzantine chant learning group at a Greek Orthodox Church. The goal of this project was to investigate the act of music making, as situated in a particular sociocultural context, in order to address the question: Through what processes do individuals share music knowledge and learn together in an informal learning group? These learning practices and this music community allowed me to question and explore how the phenomena of echo (imitation or reflection) and embodiment (internalization) manifest. By contextualizing learning processes socioculturally in a case study, I offer alternative educational theories through examining and understanding music learning as a communal process of knowing and doing, rather than one centered on individual performance and output.

Keywords: *Byzantine chant, Greek Orthodox, communities of practice, and informal learning group*

Whether described as "life-long, life-wide, and life-deep" by Banks et al. (2007), or as occurring in "multiple contexts" by Weiss (2005), I see learning as a process which cannot be confined to nor separated from institutions (such as universities, schools, museums, societies, communities, and families). And, since all learning is social, it is both culturally constructed, and constructing.

Learning through music making, for example, most often occurs in social contexts, is not abstracted (meaning that it involves little rehearsal beforehand), and is mainly focused on moving forward a social, cultural, or ritual practice (a communal experience). Such communal music making practices often involve repetitive and cyclical music, and the main musical patterns are a part of cultural knowledge. This allows learners (and experts) to continually internalize these patterns and processes: the basic knowledge comprising how to make and create

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their own community's music. Such processes produce (and reproduce) musical knowledge through ongoing praxis, within what Lave and Wenger (1991) call the social context of "everyday life." Thus, learning is centered in a dialogue between its particular environment (cultural world or learning space), the experts at various levels who possess parts the knowledge, and learners' continual self-evaluations and re-evaluations based on life experiences and daily practices. An individual can also move back-and-forth between the roles of expert and learner fluidly within this lived process of learning. In these processes of knowing, involving, as Jean Lave (1988) termed it, "how and what people know" and can do, as a learner begins to acquire knowledge, each new musical practice that is learned becomes internalized, then subsequent musical practices learned become situated on their predecessors.

As each new step becomes habitualized, it is assimilated through the smooth, imperceptible, cumulative process of cultural knowledge acquisition (see Bourdieu's (1997) concept of *habitus*). Through these processes, the act of knowing and learning through participating comes to mediate between individuals and the sociocultural environment, and is evaluated by 'doing.' Much as music can be perceived of as floating through the air, music learning seems to float through the space between individuals engaged in the act of learning and sharing musical knowledge and practice.

Because there are multiple meanings for learning, it is fruitful to look at how acts of learning take place contextually within a sociocultural domain. Through examining an informal learning group, engaged in a sociocultural practice of communal music learning, I invite a discussion of co-existing multiple learning processes. I consider both the context in which the learning process occurs and the intra-social interactions between the individuals who come to embody the knowledge of the musical practice and will come to continually create and recreate it within their cultural community.

Within the religious context of a Greek Orthodox Church, the process of learning music takes place within sociocultural activities such as church services and community events. And, learning is informally passed between community members during these activities, rather than resulting from explicit instruction. Many community members at Holy Spirit Greek Orthodox Church in upstate New York where I conducted this study, are focused on and interested in music, specifically the Byzantine chant of the Orthodox Church tradition. Therefore, many community members of various backgrounds and ability levels meet weekly in an informal learning group, in order to learn how to read and chant Byzantine music. Within these meetings, a communal learning environment has developed in which learning is worked out together, with multiple individuals, in a sociocultural situated process.

In this case of study, I sought to examine these informal learning processes through those acts of music making in which individuals share music knowledge and learn together in an informal learning group setting. I asked: how does this group of people go about learning to chant Byzantine music in an informal setting within a Greek Orthodox Church in America? Through what processes do individuals share music knowledge and learn together in this informal learning group? And, I later was led to question how the phenomena of echo and embodiment occur within this informal learning setting? Thus, by looking at ways of learning music outside of traditional academic institutions and without the use of Western music notation, this project, concerning spaces and methods for music learning in social context, draws from the theoretical approaches to learning, teaching and the sharing of knowledge within the fields of music education, education, and ethnomusicology.

The term informal learning has a varied and contested meaning in extant literature. For instance, the terms nonformal and informal are considered different in nature by some authors (see Folkestad 2006), but used as synonyms by other scholars in the field (see Colley et al. 2003, and Hodkinson 2010). But, as Hodkinson (2010) and Folkestad (2006) point out, rather than distinct categories of formal and informal learning, in most situated learning practices a continuum exists in which there is a mixture of formal and informal learning practices. For the purposes of this paper, I will pull from the work of Colley et al. (2003), to define learning as more or less formal or informal by looking at the location, purposes, processes, and content in multiple combinations. In this case, learning is occurring outside of a learning institution, for the purpose of participant interest, and through a shared process without a proscribed course of learning. Therefore, though the content being learned could be considered formal in another situation, the mixture of the four attributes together leads me to define the learning activities I describe here as lying very far towards the informal end of the formal-informal learning spectrum.

Theoretical Underpinning

"To hear is always to participate, to be corporeally involved, engaged, positioned" (Bowman 2004, 38). Practiced, enacted learning is more internalized than memorized facts, and often remembered for a lifetime (such as, you never forget how to ride a bicycle). Through contextually enacted practices, individuals learn as they work towards becoming experts or full participants in a practice, acquiring skills and taking on identity associated with the practice. In contrast, the more easily quantifiable (and measured), abstracted structures used currently in the majority of traditional education models tend to exclude culturally practiced, situated learning such as Lave and Wenger (1991) describe.

One difficulty encountered while examining learning processes is that learning is a complex social phenomenon, affected by a multiplicity of variables (ranging from sociocultural practices and ideologies, to technologies and cosmologies). And, the weight and effect of one or more of these variables' dominance affects how each individual, and the larger community, is going to (variably) address their own concepts of learning. So, contextualizing our understanding of learning processes socioculturally enables an examination and understanding of learning as a communal process of knowing and doing, rather than one centered on individual performance and output.

The learning process has long been discussed by scholars in terms of both biological and sociocultural elements, and tied to the use of imitation and movement and relationships to material artifacts, showing how learning is a historical, sequential process. On a biological level, the neural and motor systems are involved in taking in information, and shaping the body for a particular skill, knowledge, or ability demanded while learning. As such, sociocultural learning is the result of practice, emerging, as Downey (2010) describes, from the imitation of actions, mimicry, observation, and listening, situated interpersonally, socially, culturally and historically. Therefore, to learn involves attempting to replicate that which is observed, touched, heard, smelled, or tasted while individuals are physically moving through the processes and spaces in which skills are captured. As Trevor Marchand (2010) states, "arguably more effective than vision for learning skill and acquiring practice is to have one's positions, postures, and movements physically manipulated and guided by another person" (112). In the performance process, or in the praxis of making music, the body becomes a medium for the transfer of musical knowledge.

Because the body connects to the mind, facilitates a relationship with the social and natural environment, and allows for internal (tacit) and external (explicit) perception, in terms of "everyday" music learning, the body allows for people to show "how and what [they] *know* under ordinary circumstances." And, learning has the ability to highlight the ways that musical knowing occurs in the "lived-in world" when it is situated in the body, to use some of the terminology of Jean Lave (1988).

Phenomenology studies, such as the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), have long discussed the perception of the "body-subject" as central to "lived experience" as it relates to the surrounding world, and Jean Lave also proposes that knowing is simultaneously "creative and reproductive participation at the same time." To use Tia DeNora's (2000) words, in terms of music experiences, "normally imperceptible micromovements such as how one holds one's eyebrows, cheekbones or shoulders, [and] the tension of one's muscles" have been used to indicate the subconscious "alignment, between music and the body" (78). From

this perspective, the body and sensory system have been positioned as both receptor (learner) and emitter (expert) of knowledge and skills, and can be seen to shape our senses in terms of both biological and cultural construction. Thus, the auditory, tactile, and visual senses interact simultaneously to inform thinking and transfer information back and forth between the student and the teacher, such as is noted in Tomie Hahn's (2007) study of Japanese dance. From this viewpoint, the body, through the senses, becomes a site of learning and sharing music knowledge (see Bresler 2004).

When the mind and body are considered separately, then what the body experiences (phenomenologically), knows (cognitively), and can do becomes relegated to secondary importance and has been referred to using terms such as "intuition" or "feeling," in effect "othering" musical knowing, as Bowman (2004, 29) puts it. However, when mind-and-body are considered a single unit, knowing through the body (embodied knowledge) cannot be considered inferior to the knowing of the mind (reason). Many cultural communities employ body metaphors to not only describe their thinking about the mind-and-body as one, but can even can be seen to extend this physical structure to their musical practices, using allegories to the body. These body metaphors in music learning are evidenced by countless ethnomusicological studies, including Stephen Feld's (1984) work with the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, Ted Levin's research in Mongolia (2006), Ellen Koskoff's (2001) work with Jewish Lubavitcher musicians in Brooklyn, Jane Sugarman's (1997) research among Prespa Albanians, and Richard Widdess' (2006) research in India, to cite only a few studies.

In such cultural music making practices, as people learn to know, they constantly reconstruct themselves through their ongoing doing, creating what Tim Ingold (2011) calls a "meshwork of lines of living" (39), or to quote Clifford Geertz (1973) they come to be "suspend[ed in] webs of significance [they themselves have] spun" (5), through the process of learning and knowing. In addition to the studies I have listed here, many other cross-cultural examples of scholarship exist which connect music, nature-and-society, body-and-mind, and illustrate the relationship of individual explicit knowledge (historically thought of as occurring in the "mind") to collective tacit knowledge (considered to be centered in in the body) (see Cook and Brown 1999). Taken together, these elements extend the full spectrum through which the process of music knowing appears.

If, then, the body and mind are "inseparable," and all cognition is materially based, as Bowman (2004) suggests, then the experience of the body is, "indispensable to all human knowledge" (31). In this way, knowing through the body (or embodied knowledge) cannot be considered inferior (to reason) in cognitive terms, and, as he puts it, "the bodily-constituted knowledge [of music] is not different from intellectual kinds of knowing." In their well-known musical eth-

nographies, both Tia Denora (2000), using the descriptor of the body "latching" onto music, and Stephen Feld (1984) speaking of "feeling" and "groove" employ these terms for a deep sort of musical knowledge, because they are attempting to find language to represent the relationship of the body (and identity) to music knowing. Such embodied learning reaches, as James Banks et al. (2007) describe it, "life-long, life-wide, and life-deep." As such, the knowing is owned, important, and lasting.

In my case of study, for example, Byzantine chant is learned and taught in a generative way (additive layers of knowing are obtained through cycles of repetitions learned over a lifetime within cultural context) by various chanters simultaneously, as hymns are sung in church. Various actors (people/musicians) function as both experts and learners during the practice of chanting, and are able to gain further knowledge about what musical elements are aesthetically valuable and therefore should be replicated by the learners. Knowing how to chant is worked out in and through the process of chanting via physical movement, and sensed by the body mainly as aural, tactile, or kinesthetic information. It is in the praxis of chant itself that this music replicates, which means, a chanter learns to chant by chanting—through engaging the voice, the senses, and the body in a situated sociocultural context. Taking this theoretical background into consideration, this project extended these ideas to focus on the patterns and perceptions that group members connect to this music, while learning more about how community members interpret and understand music and learning to chant on their own terms.

In order begin answering my initial research questions (How does this group of people learn to chant Byzantine music together in an informal setting within a Greek Orthodox Church in America?; How is the act of music making situated in this particular sociocultural context?; And, through what processes is music knowledge shared and learned collectively by individuals within this community of practice?), I considered how community music experts and learners structure their own conceptualization of chant, and how they go about learning and teaching it, while creating community of practice.

I employed the method of participant-observation, focusing my fieldwork on the informal Byzantine chant learning group at Holy Spirit Greek Orthodox Church over the course of two liturgical years, engaging group members in informal discussions and conducting both informal and formal interviews. In addition to participating as a member of the group, I also conducted formal, audio-recorded interviews with the group leader and three other members of the group separately. I was then able to produce descriptive, ethnographic fieldnotes of my observations and the informal interviews, transcripts of the formal interviews, and a series of researcher memos, all of which were line-by-line (open)

coded, then focus coded, and finally axially coded for themes. In addition, I was able to collect and selectively code multiple artifacts from the site including emails exchanged between all participants, photocopies and digital files of printed hymn notation, some with the addition of various learners' handwritten notation, and digital audio/video recordings of various hymns that were circulated among members via email, as well as primary documents including a copy of a published paper in English on Byzantine music that the class shared and used for learning. As I am a trained Greek Orthodox chanter and church member, there were benefits and drawbacks to approaching this study from an insider's perspective, but my rapport with community members allowed me access to multiple informants within the community, and facilitated successfully conducting this project in an in-depth and timely manner.

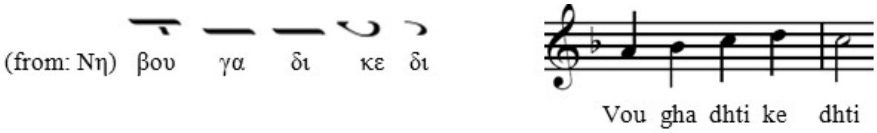
The Byzantine Chant Learning Group

My work with this group offered some insight into the individual and collective actions of the participants within the space through the multiple processes of learning which co-exist during the group's meetings. While some new members were added to the Byzantine chant learning group throughout the year, others who were new during my initial visit came to embody the musical knowledge being shared and were now simultaneously functioning both as learners and experts, variably. I would like to share an excerpt from my field notes, in order to illustrate many of the learning processes I witnessed during this study. In order to illustrate a few of the musical patterns being learned, I have included musical incipits. They appear in the Byzantine notation the class is learning (to the left side), but I have transcribed them very roughly into Western notation (seen on the right) for clarity.

> The Byzantine music learning group is gathering again at Holy Spirit Greek Orthodox Church. Group members are drawn from the parish, as well as from the other Greek Orthodox church in town, and meetings are organized by the group leader, Mr. Christos Balouris, who while a lawyer by profession is a chanter at Holy Spirit, has been trained to read Byzantine music, and has many years of chanting experience. Each member of the group received an email from the group leader last Thursday, including a reminder of which three hymns the group decided would be worked on this week, with some attached recordings to listen to and the music notation in PDF files. Chris, as most members call the group leader, is already at the end of the long table in the room behind the narthex (the entrance area to the church). As each person enters, they ask him questions. He asks each person how reading through the music he sent "went for them" and some general questions arise about the Second Tone. First, a newer student to the group mentions that she is having trouble hearing the dif-

ference between the hard and soft chromatic scales in the Second Tone. Chris explains that the *paralagi* (pitch syllable) of 'zo' (7th scale degree) is "sharped going up and flattened down in the soft chromatic," and he also explains how the 'ke' (6th scale degree) is "extra sharp." Another group member interjects: "like a double sharp plus." This member, who has joined the group recently, asks if she has the *epihima* (the small motive that is sung to get the chanter's ear into the right tone before a tone change during a service) right, and she sings it to the group:

'vou, gha, dthi, ke, dhti.'



Both Chris and one of the more longstanding group members chant back a more fluttered 'ke…' for her to hear how it should be sung. She repeats the pattern again, adding the new fixed flutter, and by then all the seats are filled but one, so the focus in the room shifts to the whole group.

The group first reviews the Doxology in both the First Mode and the Second Mode, the Brief Versions. The group has sung through the Doxology (a hymn of praise that occurs before every Divine Liturgy service on Sundays) in each of the eight Byzantine tones. Each Doxology has the same words, but each version has its own unique prototypical melody and shows off the main characteristics of its tone. These rotate through an eight week cycle in the church calendar, so each is heard once every eight weeks. Each person has either printed the music from the email, and now lays out all six pages in front of them, pencil ready in hand, or has their tablet or laptop set up in front of them.

First, the Chris sings the *epihima* to prepare everyone's ears: "ni…pa, pa."

All the students either tap with their pencils on the pitch marking above each word syllable, or point to it on their electronic device as they begin to sing the *paralagi* together with varying levels of confidence:

"Ke, dthi, dthi, gha, vou, gha, vou, gha, dthi…"

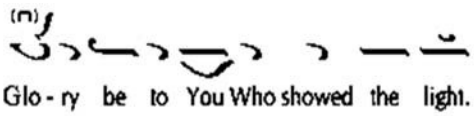
They sing through the hymn until they come to an abrupt stop at the bottom of the page. As the group comes to a pitch marking that is used considerably infrequently, there is some confusion about which *paralagi* syllable (and pitch) to sing. Four notes are heard at once, after which the chanting stops and many participants are seen to shake their heads or make faces that signify they are confused or unhappy with the result. Chris says, "I missed that one, too, it was supposed to be a 'dthi' (5th scale degree). Everyone pencils that note into their music, while he continues, "lets back up to the last *martyria* (the goal markers in the music that show the chanter that they are on the right *paralagi* at that point in the music) and we'll try it again.

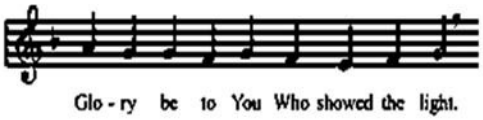
They chant again until the middle of the next page, when three people in the group sing a rhythm slower than the other group members. "Wait," says one of the members who sang the rhythm quickly, "we lost a few people there, at the continuous *elaphron*, let's go back for them." "Ele-what?" asks one of the newer members. "*Ela-phron*," replies Chris, "it's where the hook showing to go down one pitch is nearly elided with the crooked eyebrow mark, the *elaphron*, which makes you jump down two notes. You just put them together quickly like this:

'dhti…, ke…, dthi…, gha-vou, pa…'"

"Ahh," respond five people in the group, seemingly at once. There is more writing on paper by many, and then Chris says, "okay, now let's all give it another go from the same 'dhti' *martyria*," and the chanting begins again. After three more similar stops and corrections, the group finishes chanting to the end of the hymn. Group members spontaneously sigh, sit back in their chairs, or take a drink of water. Some people write more notes on their papers. No one speaks for nearly a minute. Then, Chris says, "ready to do it on words?"

Everyone nods, and he starts again singing the same First Tone *epihima* as before: "ni, pa, pa." After an audible breath, everyone begins to chant syllabically: "Glo-ry-be-to-You-Who-showed-the-light…"





This time, with a few minor mistakes scattered throughout the piece, and among members of the group, they sing through the whole hymn without stopping. "That was easier!" interjects a younger group member, and everyone agrees. Chris responds, "It's always easier on words, because we just did the *paralaghi*, but don't get lazy and leave it out or you'll start to miss some of the flavor of the tones when you chant."

He continues, "So, want to do it again, or ready to review the Second Mode one?" The consensus is to move on to the Second Mode, and there is a loud shuffling of papers and belongings while group members lay this music out on the table and prepare their tablets. Chris repeats what he told the newer group member earlier about the Second Mode scale, and has all the members of the group echo him in intoning the Second Tone *epihima* this time: "vou, gha, dthi, ke, dthi." One of the group members, who says he does not speak Greek, asks quietly what the marking *'Ηχος* on the music means, and the newer member, who is fluent in Greek, leans over and writes on his paper while saying, "it's pronounced ee-kos, like echoes, and it means hymn or sound." "Ohh…" respond a few others, and there is more scribbling of notes. Chris seems ready to forge ahead, "ready," he says aloud, and without pausing begins singing the same *epihima* again: "vou, gha, dthi, ke, dthi." Then he takes a breath and everyone starts chanting the Second Tone Doxology. They continue for two pages, and then the singing suddenly stops. "What happened?" asks Chris. One of the more longstanding members of the group replies, "I'm not sure, but I think after that 'dthi' *martyria* on verse ten, we all wanted to sing 'dthi' on the next syllable. "Yeah," Chris replies empathetically, "that's hard to get used to but you have to remember that those *martyria* are just goal posts, and as we walk THROUGH them they tell us if we are on the *paralagi* syllable we should be on, but then the next pitch mark shows us where to go FROM there, up or down. It's tricky. Let's try it again."

After two more attempts, all the members can sing it and they continue to sing through the whole tune as a group. However, there is a great silence at the end, while Chris finishes the final bit of the melody in a great flourish. He grins and asks, "Why did I just have a solo?" "Um," stammers another member of the group who has not spoken yet, "at the end of the hymns the *neumes* (pitch markings) all kind of stack up on top of each other, and I can't figure out what to do with them all." "Ahh," he replies, "let me break it down for you." After a quick and complicated explanation filled with

some technical chant jargon, the faces of the group members appear as if they are more confused, but Chris cannot see this, because his vision has recently become impaired. So, the same group member who spoke before interjects into the silence to let him know, "I think we're even more lost now, sorry." "It's okay," says Chris, "just try not to worry about it and get what you can…it will come with time." He continues, "just echo me for now." He sings the passage, and when everyone echoes him, he nods, "close enough…good for you!" The group repeats the whole hymn on words without stopping. One person leans over and writes on a newer member's music when she stops singing briefly, and points on her paper to indicate which note is being sung currently. The group decides to move on to chanting the *Katavasiae* of Christmas in First Tone (the two canons of eight odes each that have distinct melodies for each ode).

They sing through the First Canon on *paralagi*, but Chris states that some of the words in English are not very good translations from the Greek, which he knows from memory, so he has the group change some words. He also goes through the particular syllables for a couple of hard passages, and the other group members write them into their papers. All the group members are unable to sing the final parts of the last two odes ("when the pitch markings all stack up," as the group member previously expressed it) and Chris uses imitative echo again to obtain a group consensus. Then, they sing through the whole hymn on words. "Great!" says Chris, "I'll let the choir director know that we'll sing it during the church service in two weeks, so the choir can take a break for part of the service, since it's a long one, right before Christmas." "Oh no," says the newcomer. "You'll be fine," says her neighbor while patting her on the shoulder, "you can stand next to me and look at my book and I'll point so you don't get lost." "Oookaay," she responds warily, "I'll do my best."

The group decides to move into the empty church to chant, and the Group Leader asks two of the men with low voices to sing the harmony part, the *ison* (moveable musical drone). They take their music with them and walk silently to the front of the church near the chanter's stand and begin to chant in two parts, the melody and the *ison* harmony. When they make a mistake, they do not stop, but do lean in to sing into a neighboring person's ear, or point to the place in the music where the group is at currently, or look at one another, making eye contact. One of the most longstanding members of the group is asked by Chris to mark the passages not sung well, and as soon as they are done chanting, he calls the person taking notes by name, asking "Okay, so what did we miss?" As the woman reads off each problem spot, the group goes back and sings that section again once or twice. After the group repeats eight of these small sections, Chris turns his back to them at *psaltiri* (chanter's stand) and says, "I can't see you, so just watch me, and I'll try to gesture the timing big enough so you can see it. Just keep going, stay together, and sing OUT." The group takes

> a collective breath and sings again. "You're ready," says Chris, "see you all on Sunday. Drive safely."
>
> Everyone returns to the room to gather their belongings, but a few stay behind to ask each other and Chris some questions, while others trickle slowly out to other activities and home. The newcomer offers to drive one of the college students home, as she had walked and it was cold outside. And, two of the young men agree to go "grab a coffee together before calling it a night." Everyone seems tired from all the singing, but also not really ready for the evening to end just yet. (from the Author's Fieldnotes, November 12, 2014)

Significance of the Research and Contribution

Music learning and language learning share enacted practices of doing wherein people participate within a sociocultural community. Music learning shares Vygotsky's linguistic concept of internalization, and what has been described as imitation (see Lantolf 2000).

Seen through the lens of situated practice, in the process of internalization, which Winegar (1997) terms "a negotiated process that reorganizes the relationship of the individual to her or his social environment" (31), the learning space becomes a context which both changes individuals and is changed by them as communal learning occurs. Embodiment allows for what Yaroshevsky (1989) calls "social communication and mental activity" (230). In his law of development, Lev Vygotsky (1987) asserted that learning can begin to occur on the intrapsychological plane, that is, within the individual, only after it has first occurred on the interpsychological plane, or between people. In other words, learning first occurs in the space between individuals in a community, and then is taken in individually, that is, embodied.

Based on my fieldwork observations with the Byzantine Chant learning group, I suggest another term to describe a variation on Vygotsky's concept of imitation. When music, or language, is imitated it involves not just simple copying of someone thought they heard (see Tomasello, 2003), but can "occur with a delay of a day or more" (21) according to Meltzoff (2002). During music learning, learners are commonly asked to "echo" a model from someone who knows the musical pattern being learned. Much like an echo in nature, in a sociocultural environment during music learning, the model is repeated, often at a delay and somewhat subtly changed. This process changes the context of the community's music over time, and means that the community as a whole affects an individual's learning. When music, or language, is echoed, it must first be done after another person (through shifting expert/novice relationships). Only then, can it be inter-

nalized (on the intrapsychological frame). As Vygotsky (1978) explained concerning his concept the "Zone of Proximal Development," it is these "social relations or relationships among people" which "underlie all higher functions and their relationships" (86). In the process of learning, communal learning intersects cyclically with, and reciprocally shapes, individual learning.

In this current view, the body, through the senses, becomes a site of learning and sharing cultural music knowledge (see the work of educational theorists Alerby and Ferm 2005; Bowman 2004; and Bresler 2004), as is alluded to by various, culturally specific references connecting the body and music, (as can be seen in the ethnomusicological work of Seeger 1987, Koskoff 2001, Levin 2006, Solís 2004, and Turino 2008). For example, members of the chant group often expressed the idea of feeling the note "right here" while variably tapping the chest, chin, stomach, or head. Through the body, the members of the Byzantine chanting group are learning the ways in which chanters should sound, move, behave, and act. This is because the process of learning, regardless of the model, teaches new knowledge by way of teaching how to be a part of a community.

For example, the members of the group are allowed to make mistakes, so when the group stops because the result is no good and the leader commiserates that he missed it as well, everyone can try again and continue to learn together. Thus, there is no clear teacher, just a model to follow, though that individual makes mistakes along with the group. Also, because this is not formalized instruction, there is no vocabulary that is known by the members. While Byzantine music has a vocabulary, this is not known to most of the group, and learning it is not the aim of this gathering. Rather, they pick what hymns to work on as a group, and aim to create together a working vocabulary of their own making. For example, in order to explain what the "elephron" symbol does, Chris describes what it looks like ("the crooked eyebrow mark") and explains what it makes the singer's voice to do ("jump down two notes"). It is the music making together which is important and the focus, not learning a specific notational vocabulary.

In addition, the group shows many times how it is through repetition, not explanation or direct instruction that a particular hymn is internalized, as seen in the above fieldnotes when "after three more similar stops and corrections," the group was finally able to chant to the end of the particular hymn they were trying to learn. By repeating so many times, members of the group were able to self-correct their mistakes, or help correct their neighbor's mistakes, and to memorize how the tune should go. Some could sing the tune by the end, though they were still not clear what was on the page. They were improving combining the skills of rote, communal learning with an every growing idea of the symbols or tools on the page, even those that had not been explained to them.

In such an informal learning setting, every individual fluctuates fluidly between the roles of teacher and learner, variably as each person increases their skills and set of tools, and as new members join the group. For example, when the group finally made it through the hymn on words and the younger members thought it was "easier," the more experienced members pointed out that if you take the easy way and do not "work through it on paralaghi" (like solféfge), that you will "get lazy" and "start to miss some of the flavor." This is because it is necessary to gain some confidence to be successful in the group, but not to gain too much that you become complacent. This is a prime example of Vygotsky's (1978) "Zone of Proximal Development" (86), wherein individuals must always be somewhat safe and somewhat on the alert (and pushed to the edge of their own abilities) at the same time, in order to facilitate progress and learning.

Byzantine chant is learned in praxis, as individuals go through the process of chanting, not through abstract practice or by reading or studying about it. When Chris says, "It's okay…just try not to worry about it and get what you can…it will come with time…just echo me for now," he is implying that you learn over time as you go through the process, that you cannot get it through working on it alone. This is why more seasoned members of the group encourage the timid newcomers to perform without being afraid of chanting badly, because it is part of the training of the chanter to chant. Thus, when the newer member was afraid to sing during the upcoming service, the more longstanding member, taking on the role of mentor momentarily patted her on the shoulder comfortingly and said, "You'll be fine…you can stand next to me and look at my book and I'll point so you don't get lost."

Patting another's shoulder, pointing at another's page, or leaning in to sing the correct words in another's ear emphasize the importance of that chanters place on using the body. Not only is it important to sing together as a unit or like one body, but the body is also used as a sign to signify timing and to indicate directions while chanting. Since the leader of the group is visually impaired, one might think this could cause a problem for him to lead the group in services. However, this is not the case, was is important is that they can see his body, such as when he tells them that since he cannot see them, to "just watch me, and I'll try to gesture the timing big enough so you can see it. Just keep going, stay together, and sing OUT." Chanting Byzantine music is not about getting it right or wrong in this setting, it's about embodying it together and echoing one another.

What the body feels while chanting is personal (on the intrapsychological plane) it is first and foremost experienced during the process of chanting with others as a shared common feeling (on the interpsychological plane). Such holistic and informed learning is situated in the context of everyday life, and is more cyclical than linear in nature.

In contrast, one common American model of teaching and learning, referred to as the "assembly line model" by Rogoff (2014, 76), developed in school settings as a response to a past influx of immigrants into the society around the turn of the century, and was an attempt to teach a group of children how to be a part of the whole. However, this model did not consider the other parts of those children's lives, particularly the sociocultural contexts in which they lived. This system came to be thought of as how to 'do school,' or how to 'be' a learner. But, this system which historically marginalized many individuals and communities, remains a common model used often today. In order for learning models to be equitable, learning must be seen as communal and social, and less linear (120-126), or the learning process will be fraught with "barriers and bridges" (137) for certain groups and for individual people who often become marginalized (Bevan et al. 2012). Even more tragically, such compartmentalized learning may even marginalize parts of persons (who will eventually find ways to separate the parts of their learning to appear in ways that will make them successful, or contest this division and become unsuccessful).

Conversely, when variable expert-novice models of learning, as seen in the Byzantine chanting group, are considered, reciprocity becomes a key factor of the learning process (see Moll et al. 1992, 134). Multiple processes of learning are occurring simultaneously within a sociocultural community of practice. As newcomers or novice learners, whom Lave and Wenger (1991) would call "legitimate peripheral participants" (29), continually echo those in the community who know more than they do, that is, the experts or "full participants" (29), they continually become more a part of the community as they learn, generatively, and in turn help other individuals in the community to learn, and affect change in the space and the practice itself. While individuals soon begin to take in and embody what they are learning, they also reciprocally challenge the relative experts, through their own music making and new questions or concerns. Through these processes, each individual in the community continues to perpetually learn and grow in the practice. This reciprocity can bring the parts of the learners together into whole knowers, and form individuals into a community of practice. Perhaps this model could come to inform or question some of the methods of teaching and learning we use commonly in our schools, thereby improving instruction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of this project was to explore the process of learning through the act of music making within the informal setting of a community, taking as a case of study the Byzantine chant learning group which meets at Holy Spirit Greek Orthodox Church. By examining the process through which individuals share music knowledge and learn together in an informal group in order to

question how the process of learning within sociocultural communities is practiced, I was able to explore the phenomena of echo and embodiment as they occur during music learning within an informal, sociocultural context. These two recurring themes are perceived by group members as crucial to the process of learning to chant Byzantine music, though individuals describe them in different ways. Teaching chant in this setting is not to learn how to chant from a method book or other formal text, but rather a process of individuals learning by gathering together a series of tools and skills that when used together allow them to comprehend and perform the act of chanting Byzantine music. It is a way of feeling and living the chant, because each person chants by echoing, repeating a sound and making it their own, and learning by approaching the music through the senses, making mistakes, performing many repetitions, and via camaraderie.

I hope to extend my study in the future, looking at these concepts in other music making groups (both within Greek Orthodox communities as well as within other institutions of music learning including a collegiate music studio) in order to look more specifically at how in informal processes of learning music, knowledge seems to float within the situated learning space, as does music, between individuals who function variably as both experts and learners within situated communities of practice. Perhaps with ongoing research, the process of learning within sociocultural contexts, situated in communities of practice could come to provide theoretical learning alternatives which could empower more and different approaches to music learning. In this way, music education classrooms can truly become a spaces which are inclusive of ever more individuals and bridge many more different communities. If music teachers come to approach teaching and learning music from a place of socially situated embodiment, students' social lives, understandings, and bodies will not be discounted, but come to be seen as a place of knowing integral to the learning process. And, by considering the concept of echo as equally relevant to the place of reading and performing notation in the music classroom, music comes to be taught as a living, oral, and changing practice.

About the Author

Rachel Brashier is a PhD student in music education at the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, NY. She holds master's degrees in ethnomusicology (Eastman, 2014) and music history (Southern Illinois University, 2012), as well as a bachelor of music, with a double major in vocal performance and music education (Eastern Illinois University, 1999). In addition to being a full-time K-12 music teacher in the Chicagoland area for over a decade, and performing as a choral contralto, Rachel also is a trained Byzantine chanter in the Greek Ortho-

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