

Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education

I S S N 1 5 4 5 - 4 5 1 7

A refereed journal of the



Action for Change in Music Education

**Volume 15 Number 3
June 2016**

Essays from the International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education 2015

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Musicking in a West Bank Conservatory: Toward a Sociological Framework

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Musicking in a West Bank Conservatory: Toward a Sociological Framework

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The purpose of this paper is to share the evolution of a sociological framework to investigate the experience of teaching and learning music in relation to the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in the occupied Palestinian territories. The primary foundation of the framework is Christopher Small's (1998) theory of musicking, supported by the concept of third place from urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1999) and the reconceptualization of music education as cultural practice suggested by educational researcher Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2007, 2011). Preliminary findings suggest that Small's theory is particularly apt because of its focus on ideal relationships between infinite combinations of people, places, and sounds.

Keywords: *musicking, Christopher Small, Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, Palestine, third place, Ray Oldenburg, cultural practice, Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández*

The purpose of this paper is to share the evolution of a sociological framework conceived to investigate the experience, for Palestinians, of teaching and learning music in relation to the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM), a multi-branch institution located in the West Bank. The primary foundation of this framework is the theory of *musicking* from musicologist and cultural critic Christopher Small (1998). Tools chosen for support include the concept of *third place* from urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1999) and the reconceptualization of music education as cultural practice suggested by educational researcher Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2007, 2011).

The ESNCM offers instruction in Western and Arabic music to a wide variety of children and adults across the occupied Palestinian territories (oPT). I encountered the ESNCM for the first time during a 2010 faculty exchange that was supported by the private foundation of a Palestinian-American family. The foundation had approached my university's music department two years earlier to fund an outreach program in a city near the university, and had also encouraged a partnership with the ESNCM. During our 8-day residency, my colleagues

(a quartet of jazz musicians) ran a camp for high school aged students from all over the West Bank and East Jerusalem while I observed music teachers in several branches of the conservatory as well as in a selection of public and private West Bank schools (see Frierson-Campbell in press).

I learned just enough about the ESNM to be intrigued: Students could study Western music through a curriculum modeled on the British program run by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music; the ESNM had even created an Arabic music curriculum modeled on that system. Branches and outreach locations of the ESNM supported not only music instruction but also public musical festivals in the major cities where the branches were located (including the bi-annual Palestine National Music Competition) and a traveling Palestine Youth Orchestra (PYO) that brought youth from the worldwide Palestinian diaspora together with those from the oPT for international tours. The conservatory's administrative structure and related personnel published Arabic language books for both Oriental (Arabic) and Western music instruction as well as materials for marketing and public relations. Its physical locations provided jobs for musicians, as well as for the staff needed to maintain the buildings where its activities were housed.

My impression after this first visit was of an institution created by a community under occupation to address its own cultural needs. The ESNM's vision of "a lively and creative musical culture in every home, that would contribute towards the consolidation of Palestinian identity and the education of future generations," (ESNM n. d.) seemed to me like a re-imagining and re-creating of the musical culture that had been lost in the oPT after decades of conflict. The ESNM appeared to have created an infrastructure in Palestine for what Christopher Small calls *musicking*, that is, taking part "in any capacity, in a musical performance" (1998, 12). But what did this mean for the people who taught and learned music in this place?

What stood out to me at the time and upon returning home was how "normal" the Conservatory setting was to my Western sensibilities. And yet at the same time, the people I met had communicated both verbally and symbolically that musicking in this place constituted resistance to the constant reality of living under occupation. The driving question in my thinking about the ESNM had to do with what I called "place": How could this "place" exist as a Western-style conservatory, recognizable to anyone familiar with the community conservatories found in many Western municipalities, and at the same time serve as a locus for the construction of Palestinian identity and resistance (which in the Palestinian context are often one and the same)—when all they were *really* doing is teaching music to children?

It was the in-between element that most caught my attention. By bringing Palestinian students together from across the West Bank and beyond, giving them the choice of learning Arabic or Western music, yet providing access to both styles, my impression was that the ESNM enabled students to find their own musical and cultural “place” in between their indigenous culture and that of the West. But how was this experienced by music learners and their teachers?

Intrigued, I explored possible research options. I returned in June 2014 for a 3-week participant-observation residency during which I assisted with summer camps and explored the possibility of a longer research project. This paper shares the evolution of the concepts for a framework to assist with addressing these questions.

The Context

In his seminal book *Orientalism*, in which he deconstructs the Western view of the study of the Arab world, Edward Said (1979) demands: “Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself [sic] vis-à-vis the Orient” (20). Said continues: “For a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second (11, emphasis original).

In a somewhat similar vein, as I was preparing the proposal for this study, a friend challenged me to ask myself the same questions I would be asking of the musickers in the oPT: What is there about my own musical/cultural story that is American? How have the institutions in which I have made music helped me to construct that story? And what has been the experience of this construction? After thinking for a while, I recognized three notable things about being an American musician. First is my assumed right to take my national label completely for granted. I can go most places in the world without having anyone question my right to claim “American” as my national identity. Second is the fact that the institutions in which I have constructed my life as a White, female, straight, middle class, Protestant musicker—primarily government schools, places of worship, and concert halls—have reinforced this identity by recognizing and celebrating holidays and other events that represent my ethnic, cultural, and religious heritage, usually with music that represents or expands upon this heritage. And third, because these identities are normative in the places I inhabit, they are so invisible to me as to be taken almost entirely for granted.

Said, who identified as an “Arab Palestinian in the West” (27), reported an experience that contrasts with my own. In his 1979 book he noted that for people like him, there exists in the West an

almost unanimous consensus that politically he does not exist, and when it is allowed that he does, it is either as a nuisance or as an Oriental. The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny. (27)

As an American media consumer, my knowledge of the oPT and its people prior to my first encounter was not unlike what Said describes. While I did not have a specific perspective, I was familiar with images and news stories that portrayed faceless Palestinians as religious extremists who frequently imposed violence on their Israeli neighbors. I rarely saw images of their everyday life, other than vague reference to Palestinian refugee “camps.” The voices of Palestinians, other than the occasional political leader, were seldom part of the stories told by the media.

Said brought particular attention to music education in the oPT when he joined forces with the conductor Daniel Barenboim to form the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in 1999 (Founders 2011). The orchestra expanded to become the Barenboim-Said foundation in 2004. The ESNM is not related to the Barenboim-Said Foundation and, in fact, was conceived with a different kind of mission. While the Barenboim-Said Foundation sees music as a basis for “intercultural conciliation” between Israelis and Arabs (West-Eastern Divan Orchestra n.d.), the ESNM’s mission, vision, and activities are deliberately framed to highlight Palestinian nationalism and resistance (Belkind 2014, 56).

As described to me by Suhail Khoury, Executive Director of the ESNM, the National Music Conservatory (the precursor to the ESNM) began in 1990 when a small group of community leaders commenced a study of music education in Palestinian cities (personal conversation, December 12, 2015). Believing there was a need for a “central body” to coordinate musical activities and education throughout Palestine, they decided to create a music school. The first branch, which opened in 1993, was located in the city of Ramallah in a building that belonged to Birzeit University. The “History” section of the ESNM website lists the additional branches and their opening dates: Jerusalem in 1996, Bethlehem in 1997, Nablus in 2010. In 2012, the ESNM also incorporated the Gaza Music School, formerly run by the Qattan Foundation.

Edward Said was involved with both organizations before his death, serving as an honorary member of the ESNM board while remaining active in the Barenboim-Said Foundation. After his death, the National Music Conservatory added his name as a tribute (Tarazi 2014). There was formal cooperation between the two organizations when the Foundation first opened; while there are still many connections they no longer have an official relationship. Said’s ideas are not an overt part of the framework for this study, but his history as a refugee from the

region, his criticism of uninformed Western involvement in and assumptions about the oPT, and his own involvement in the music scene there make it important to mention him here.

Also important is an abbreviated outline of the history of the region in which the ESNM is located. The name “Palestine” once denoted a general region, basically the same as the area currently shared by the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories. Because of its strategic location between Europe, Asia, and Africa as well as its role as the birthplace of three Abrahamic religions, the region has a long history of occupation by outside groups (History of Palestine 2015). Most pertinent to current history are the occupation by the Ottomans (approx. 1516–1917), Britain (1917–1948), and Jordan (1948–1967).

The most defining event for this region in recent history is probably the Israeli Declaration of Independence in May of 1948, which, depending on whether you identify with Israelis or Palestinians, is a cause either for celebration or mourning. The 10-month war that followed established much of this land as the newly formed State of Israel, destroying Palestinian villages and displacing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the process. The remaining West Bank land was placed under the control of the Kingdom of Jordan. In June of 1967, the West Bank was captured and occupied by the State of Israel as a result of a 6-day Arab-Israeli war; the territory has been under Israeli occupation since that time.

In current parlance, the name “Palestine” (or occupied Palestinian Territories, oPT, as recognized by the United Nations as well as the U.S. and other Western countries) refers to a specific geo-political region, which includes the West Bank and Gaza Strip as defined by a 1993 treaty between Israel and the Palestinians, known as the Oslo Peace Accords (Oslo 1 Accord 2015). Annexed by the State of Israel in the 1967 war, East Jerusalem remains contested territory. It is considered part of the oPT by Palestinians as well as the United Nations and many countries around the world, but considered by the State of Israel to be the future site of its undivided capital.

It is in this “Palestine” that the ESNM and its musickers are located. Currently with branch locations in three West Bank cities (Bethlehem, Nablus, and Ramallah) plus Gaza City and East Jerusalem, as well as outreach activities in Jericho, Hebron and several UNWRA refugee camps, the ESNM provides a national (in Arabic, *watane*) locus for Palestinian musicking. Other than the cadre of Western teachers that are hired yearly to staff the Western music classes and ensembles, most participants consider themselves to be Palestinian, and speak of the land in which the conservatory is situated to be the future State of Palestine.

The Concepts

My curiosity about the intersection of the musicking practices that I observed at the ESNM and the experience, for Palestinians, of teaching, learning, and performing music in and through its various locations suggested to me that a sociological frame might be helpful for understanding both the structural and experiential nature of my questions. As noted by Wright (2010), the field of sociology provides “a series of theoretical lenses through which to examine issues ranging from the very largest scale of humanity... to the minutiae of the interactions between individuals in various contexts” (xix). Froehlich (2015) suggests that that “the relational worldview informing the definition of musicking clearly is reminiscent of clear ideas in pragmatism, interactionism, and today’s post-structuralist and postmodernist belief systems (102); further, questions about the nature of musicking are legitimate for validating Small’s theory (115).

Christopher Small’s theory of musicking

Christopher Small (1998) theorizes musicking as a cultural practice that “establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies” (13). Such relationships are not only between sounds, but are also between and among participants and the places where musicking occurs, “and they model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be” (13). Thus, musicking enables us to “learn about and explore those relationships, affirm them to ourselves and anyone else who may be paying attention, and celebrate them” (50). Here I include Small’s longer explanation of the process in full:

By bringing into existence relationships that are thought of as desirable, a musical performance not only reflects those relationships but also shapes them. It teaches and inculcates the concept of those ideal relationships, or values, and allows those taking part to try them on, to see how they fit, to experience them without having to commit themselves to them, at least for more than the duration of the performance. It is thus an instrument of *exploration*.

In articulating those values it allows those taking part to say, to themselves, to one another and to anyone else who may be paying attention: These are our values, these are our concepts of ideal relationships, and consequently, this is who we are. It is thus an instrument of *affirmation*.

And third, in empowering those taking part to explore and to affirm their values, it leaves them with a feeling of being more completely themselves, more in tune with the world and with their fellows. After taking part in a good and satisfying musical performance, one is able to feel that this is how the world *really* is, and this is how I *really* relate to it. In short, it leaves the participants feeling good about themselves and about their values. It is thus an instrument of *celebration*. (183–4, emphasis original)

In a lecture and subsequent article, Small (1999) asserted to an audience of music educators that the question most useful for understanding the experience of musicking is this one: “What does it mean when this performance takes place at this time, in this place, with these people taking part?” (13). Shortened, Small re-states the question as “What is going on here?” (14). This was exactly the question in my mind after an initial encounter with the ESNM: How do the places established by the ESNM initiate and sustain cultural practices of musicking for Palestinians in the oPT? And how do those Palestinians involved in the teaching and learning of music through the ESNM interpret these experiences?

Small’s “questions one might ask of any performance” (1998, 193) provide a starting point for expanding on these questions:

1. What are the relationships between those taking part and the physical setting?
2. What are the relationships among those taking part?
3. What are the relationships between the sounds being made? (193)

Borrowing from Gregory Bateson, Small suggests further examination of combinations of “second-order relationships, relationships between relationships, and even third-order relationships, relationships between relationships between relationships” (199).

To date, few studies have examined applications of Small’s theory of musicking empirically. Cohen (2007) undertook a historical and philosophical investigation of the theory as the basis for a framework for choral singing pedagogy in prison contexts. She found Small’s theory particularly well suited to choral singing because it emphasized the “relationships occurring both among musical sounds and among human beings” (25). After exhaustively examining the development of the theory, Cohen utilized Small’s and Bateson’s ideas about levels of interaction to suggest three levels of interactional choral pedagogy (See Table 8, 292). Level 1, called “Basic Actions” by Cohen, includes “interactions that are part of singing” and “interactions that are part of socializing.” “Interactions among somatic factors” and “Interactions between commitment to attendance and choir’s quality” comprise Level 2 (what Small would call relationships between relationships), which Cohen titled “Awareness of Word and Somatic Factors in Choral Singing.” Cohen’s third level is titled “Examples of Transfers from Choir Experiences to Life” (292). Empirical verification of the framework was beyond the scope of the study.

Cohen’s study contributes to the validation of Small’s theory by examining two kinds of relationships in the musicking context—social relationships between people and somatic relationships between people and music. By going beyond what Small calls first level relationships to consider second- and third-level rela-

tionships (the multiple ways people and sounds interact with each other), Cohen's framework demonstrates how Small's theory applies to the situation of choir in a prison setting. Yet the setting itself, despite its particularity, seems not to figure strongly in Cohen's framework.

For the present study, however, the relationship between musickers and the physical spaces they inhabit is seen as a key element in the musicking experience. My initial perception was that through its branches, the "places" established by the ESNCM served as locations for learning and teaching music and also as sites for enacting a cultural practice of Palestinian musicking. To explore these contrasting interpretations of place I have chosen two lenses. First, Oldenburg's empirical concept of "third place" proposes that certain identifiable characteristics are found in "great, good places," sites beyond the home and workplace that enable participants to find their place in society. Second, Gaztambide-Fernández's vision of music education re-conceptualized as cultural practice describes a process by which musickers from marginalized settings can acknowledge, challenge, and re-imagine the boundaries that are often used to keep them in their place.

A (third) place for musicking

As a social act, "the process of musicking functions as an instrument of socialization" (Small 2010, 283). Socialization tends to occur in "three realms of experience," (Oldenburg 1999, 14). The first, the home, is a domestic, private domain. The second, the school or workplace, is "gainful or productive" (15). And "the third is inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it" (15). Ray Oldenburg (1999) conceptualizes such "third places" (which he also calls "great, good places") as "core settings of the informal public life" (14 and 16), necessary both for individual fulfillment and for sustaining a healthy society. The in-between nature of the concept makes it an attractive empirical model for exploring how musickers at the ESNCM experience the socialization it provides. Conceived to address what Oldenburg sees as a decline in opportunities for informal socialization in American society, the concept suggests a relaxed gathering place that provides neutral ground, away from the demands of the institutions that tend to characterize so-called second places; places like bars, coffeehouses, and barber shops. Nonetheless, the concept has much in common with what I observed and heard about during my residency at the ESNCM.

Characteristics of third places according to Oldenburg include novelty, perspective, spiritual tonic, and friendship (43). Novelty emerges when people who might not otherwise interact come together. In a differently structured environment from that of the home, school, or workplace, schedules are more flexible, and topics of conversation tend less toward the mundane business of managing

the family or work environment (47). Oldenburg suggests that in contemporary American society “there is much to discourage association, and association is all the more important because of those conditions” (49). As a result, “those who retreat from human contact” may lack perspective and even become dangerous (49). Applications to the oPT are obvious, since the occupation frequently imposes situations that discourage association, not only within communities but also across the oPT. Human association through third places provides perspective by enabling communication with others from a variety of circumstances.

In a third place, you feel at home. Oldenburg uses the German word *Gemütlich* to communicate a feeling that “carries an obligation of helping others feel at home as well as doing so oneself. A *Gemütlich* setting is inviting to human beings—all of them” (56, emphasis original). As a location in which people give as well as receive, “the experience represents...the perfect union of egoism and altruism” (55). “The mood surrounding a third place” is marked, according to Oldenburg, by joy, vivacity, and relief: “Joy is the emotion evoked by well-being, vivacity suggests that the tempo is lively, and relief implies a release from duty or the breaking of monotony” (55, emphasis original). Thus, being a regular provides a kind of spiritual tonic.

The group of friends cultivated in third places is unique from that of other life circumstances. Such friends do not often frequent one another’s homes, but meet on “neutral ground” (22). Thus, “third place association is upbeat because of the freedom of expression it encourages” (58). Larger groups of friends are also not as emotionally demanding as close individual friends or family members, even as their greater number enhances the feeling of acceptance in the individual. As noted by Oldenburg, “to be enthusiastically welcomed into such an assembly, to be acknowledged and greeted by people from different walks of life, does considerable good for the individual’s self-esteem (64).

There is also a political element to third places. Simply by enabling that “most basic of all political activities—*talk*” (71, emphasis original), third places are essential to the political processes of a democracy” (67). Noting that Americans tend to take for granted the freedom of association that they enjoy, Oldenburg reports that such freedom may be a threat to totalitarian governments, which often take measures to shut down such places (67).

Perhaps because schools are not usually places attended by choice, little in the way of educational research has used the third place concept. That which does tends to address ways in which certain educational situations set participants apart from others, creating a kind of community within. For instance, Cannon (2000) found that Indonesian graduate students who had participated in an overseas education program felt that the connections provided by the experience provided a sense of belonging to a unique group, despite disadvantages related to

travel and being far from home. A similar finding was described by Higgins and Stoker (2011), whose ethnographic analysis of narratives related to Korean heritage language suggested that “Korean-born, US-raised adoptee-returnees who currently reside in Seoul, South Korea and speak Korean” (abstract) as a second language found a third place through interaction with a social network of other adoptee-returnees.

Anthropologists Moore, Gathman, and Ducheneaut (2009) applied Oldenburg’s concept to massively multiplayer online (MMO) environments, sophisticated Internet-based computer games such as *World of Warcraft* where gamers interact in person through text chat messages that are communicated by the characters they create to play the game (230). Their study focused specifically on interactions in virtual dance clubs and bars. Focusing on three specific MMO environments, they collected screen-capture videos from “various virtual worlds” (232) and analyzed them ethnographically for evidence of accessibility, social density, activity resources, and hosts (230). Their analysis found many similarities between social realities online and off, in particular noting both a virtual and real-life limitation of Oldenburg’s theory, “that third places must be second places for someone (that is, places of work)” (238).

Oldenburg’s concept may be best known because CEO Howard Schultz uses it to identify the ubiquitous Starbucks coffeeshops. Simon (2009), however, employs the same concept to challenge this claim. After one and one half years of participant observation and interviews, Simon concluded that Starbucks exists to make a profit, and the idea that its stores are places that bring people together is an illusion supported by the 30-40% of customers that choose to stay in the comfortable chairs and consult their iPods or laptops (259).

Based on extensive research, Oldenburg (1999) compiled a list of “community-building functions which ‘great good places’ typically perform” (xvii). While none of the studies described above explicitly use this list of characteristics, I suggest that they provide a good starting place for understanding the interactions between musickers and the physical locations provided by the ESNM. According to Oldenburg, third places:

- unite the neighborhood by serving as a “mixer,”
- support assimilation,
- serve as a “port of entry” for visitors and newcomers,
- serve as “staging areas,”
- provide the community with “public characters,”
- bring “youth and adults together in relaxed enjoyment,”

- “provide a means for retired people to remain in contact with those still working and, in the best instances, for the oldest generation to associate with the youngest,”
- function as places where friends come together,
- enable participants to have fun,
- provide stimulation in the form of entertainment and conversation,
- serve as intellectual fora where regulars can “air their notions in front of critics,” and
- “force members to come to terms with people who don’t agree with them” (xvii-xxv).

While Oldenburg’s concept will be useful for examining the ways in which the various locations supported by the ESNMCM enhance community socialization through musicking, it does not acknowledge the particularities of the locations in which “third places” are found, or allow for the interpretation of those places by the musickers themselves. For this purpose a different kind of theory is needed, one that attends to the cultural nature of musicking, particularly for a marginalized people in a contested location.

The (cultural) practice of musicking

Reconceptualizing music education for the marginalized as cultural practice, as suggested by Gaztambide-Fernández (2011), can enable musickers “to work both *with* and *against* the prevailing narrow conception” (17, emphasis original) of the margin that defines places and the people that inhabit them as on one side or the other. Gaztambide-Fernández is speaking of the boundary between “urban” and “urbane,” but the concept applies easily to both the place and the label Palestinian (whether the binary is Israeli or Western). Gaztambide-Fernández’s model provides not only an acknowledgement of the importance of place in pedagogical settings, but also a way to challenge and recreate the imaginaries of what those places mean to the people who inhabit them.

He begins by exploring cultural practices of “urban”; here I use his model to argue that musicking is imagined and enacted by the ESNMCM as a cultural practice of “Palestinian.” Borrowing from Leonardo and Hunter (2007), he begins with consideration of material realities. This means defining and acknowledging the location of the margin as a geo-political region with specific empirical details related to topography as well as spatial arrangements and the distribution of resources (Gaztambide-Fernández 2011, 18). Consider the sentence below, replacing the word “urban” with “Palestinian”:

Defining the urban as a concrete region allows social scientists to make observations about the material conditions of those spaces, how resources are (unequal-

ly) distributed, and how this inequality is enforced through concrete spatial arrangements (Davis 2006, Massey 1993). (18)

How do spatial arrangements impact the experiences and beliefs of people on either side of the margin? What is communicated and interpreted on the basis of these concrete realities? Such is the “imaginary,” the sometimes invisible social expectations that are grounded in the spaces we inhabit. Gaztambide-Fernández underscores that “the urban is partly constituted in the dialectical relationship between real economic and racial inequality, and the ways in which the urban is imagined” (21) by those on the inside as well as the outside. He suggests that with a cultural practice approach to music education, musickers can acknowledge, challenge and re-envision this imaginary.

Gaztambide-Fernández notes that there are obvious disadvantages to living in a marginalized and stigmatized setting; however, “these contradictions open up cracks of possibility that are only rendered visible through the daily lives and practices of the people who inhabit” (21) the margin. He uses Michele de Certeau’s (1984) chapter “Walking in the City” to illustrate “how *the city* is made in and through the daily practices of those who dwell in *the urban*” (quoted in Gaztambide-Fernández 21, emphasis original). Similar to Lefebvre’s (1991) ideas about space, Certeau contrasts the *concept* of the city—the way it was designed by city planners—from what he calls the “*urban fact*, the human practices that make up the way people interpret the city and its places” (21, emphasis original). For Certeau, the city is not made of roads and buildings. Instead, “through the rhetoric of walking, the city is made by the interminable collection of people in search of a place as they “make some parts of the city disappear and exaggerate others, distorting it, fragmenting it, and diverting it from its immobile order” (Certeau 1984, quoted in Gaztambide-Fernández 2011, 22).

So it is the practice of living in urban spaces that enables people to find “their place” in such locations, acknowledging their realities, yet often finding room on the margin to challenge the imaginaries of that place through their everyday practices. In similar fashion, I argue that the practice of musicking is envisioned by the ESNM as a way to enact and re-imagine Palestinian musical and cultural practice.

Applications

The concepts described above suggested to me that interpretive qualitative research methods—primarily narrative and ethnographic interview and observation—would be appropriate to explore the experience of musicking in relation to the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music. “Seeking to make sense of actions and narratives, and the ways in which they intersect” (Glesne 2016, 1) indi-

cates qualitative research methods; specifically, “interacting with people in their social contexts and talking with them about their perceptions” (9). My intention to “grasp the meanings” given by Palestinians to the experience of musicking implied an interpretivist point of view (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, 296). Since my initial and primary question was, as described above, “What is going on here?” ethnography also figured into my thinking (Anderson-Levitt 2006). Finally, believing that it is through stories that people tell us how they have come to understand their world (Clandinin 2006), I included narrative inquiry in my research design.

My research question and sub-questions included the following:

1. How does the experience of interacting with the “lively and creative musical culture” envisioned by the ESNCM evidence musicking; that is, the exploration, affirmation, and celebration of relationships to places, people, and sounds?
 - a. How do these experiences differ 1) by age, gender, social status, ethnicity, education level, etc.? 2) according to a person’s role in the ESNCM? 3) for those learning and teaching Arabic music, Western music, or a combination?
 - b. What is unique about the experience for those who were children or adolescents during times of conflict (such as the first or second Intifada, or the current conflict)?
 - c. What is unique about the experience for those musicians who began at the ESNCM as students and have returned as teachers?
 - d. Which of these experiences are unique to the Palestinian situation and which might generalize to music learning and teaching in the US and around the world?
2. In what ways does the ESNCM act as a *third place* (as defined by Oldenberg) in the communities it serves?
 - a. What evidence suggests novelty, perspective, spiritual tonic, and friendship?
 - b. What other social roles does the ESNCM play in the communities it serves?
 - c. What tensions in this role do members of the ESNCM community suggest?
 - d. Which elements of this role are unique to the Palestinian situation and which are generalizable to cultural institutions in the US and around the world?
3. How does the ESNCM enact music education as cultural practice (as envisioned by Gaztambide- Fernández)?

- a. What evidence suggests acknowledging the material?
- b. What evidence suggests challenging the imaginary?
- c. How is their practice unique to the Palestinian situation and how might it generalize to music learning and teaching in the US and around the world?

The research itself would occur in two phases. The first (for which this framework was initially conceived) would occur during the ESNCM's summer camp, housed at their Birzeit Activity Center. (On a practical note, as a full-time professor of music education, this setting would also coincide with my summer break.) If, during this study, it appeared that the setting was appropriate for a longer study and the ESNCM was open to such, a second, longer study would be developed.

In many ways an ideal location for initial fieldwork, the camp setting provided a short-term microcosm of the ESNCM as a whole. The residency lasted three weeks, 14 days of which were spent living on sight assisting with camps while the remainder was spent writing, visiting other branches, and touring. I had access to interview adult students (former and present) as well as teachers, administrators, and board members in various ESNCM settings. These participants represented a variety of Palestinian identities: Muslim, Christian, West Bank-ers, Jerusalem-ites, and those with Israeli passports.

My role was that of participant-observer. As participant, I assisted with two camp sessions: the ESNCM's first marching band camp, and their "general camp" where youth studying either Arabic or Western music come together to learn more about their respective crafts. For the latter camp I co-directed the camp choir, working collaboratively with a well-known expatriate Palestinian percussionist who created Arabic percussion backgrounds for the songs—both Western and Arabic—that we sang.

The initial fieldwork was successful, not only in helping me address many of my questions, but also in solidifying interest on my part and that of the ESNCM in pursuing additional study in the form of an extended residency. As I write, the second, longer phase of the research is nearing its end. Like the first phase, it began with fieldwork during the summer camp, but continued with a four and a half month participant-observer residency in the West Bank.

Closing Thoughts

My exploration of the experience of musicking in the context of the ESNCM in occupied Palestine has taught me a great deal about interpretations of "place," and how such may matter for musickers from marginalized areas. Initially, my primary question (and therefore my primary lens) had to do with the role of the

ESNCM as a so-called third place, with the related concepts of musicking and cultural practice as tools for exploring the impact of the conservatory. Preliminary findings suggested that Oldenburg's characteristics for third places fit well with many of the participants' social and musical experiences at the ESNCM, but the relationships described by the Palestinian musicians who took part in the pilot study and the places where they make music went far beyond the conservatory's locations. In fact, this relationship—between people and place (as suggested by Small's theory)—was by far the dominant theme in the data. The musickers with whom I spoke indicated a variety of relationships to the contested land in which they live and work, and based on those relationships a variety of socio-political identities—some based on mores from their home communities, and others imposed by the Israeli occupation.

This initial finding led me to realize that I had been taking the classroom setting for granted without recognizing the importance of the locations where the classrooms were situated (Gaztambide-Fernández 2011, 17-18). Despite my knowledge of the contested nature of the geo-political location of the ESNCM in the oPT, I had failed to acknowledge the multiple layers of place that are part of the experience of living as a Palestinian in the West Bank. I would have to adjust my lens.

At its most basic, “place refers to either a location somewhere or to the occupation of that location. The first sense is of having an address and the second is about living at that address” (Agnew 2011, 318). Further, “places are profoundly pedagogical,” (Gruenewald 2003, 621) teaching us “who, what, and where we are, as well as how we might live our lives” (636). As “centers of experience, places can also be said to hold our culture and even our identity.... We live our lives in places, and our relationship to them colors who we are” (625).

Agnew's dual explanation of place resonates with Bateson's “double reciprocal” approach, a key part of Small's theory of musicking (see Small 1998, p. 51). Bateson suggests that the Biblical psalmist's question, “Lord, what is man that thou shout be mindful of him?” (quoted in Small 1998, 51) is incomplete without also querying the nature of the humans who seek a God. The point is that “the answer to one depends on the answer to the other” (51), and further, that this kind of questioning “gives a greater depth than either question asked individually” (51).

My framework would therefore need to be based on a concept that would go beyond the role of the ESNCM as a place, to query the relationships participants experienced—with place, with each other, and with music—in the process of musicking. Thus, the theory of musicking became the primary lens, with the concepts suggested by Oldenburg and Gaztambide-Fernández serving as tools for exploring the empirical and experiential elements of relationships between peo-

ple and place. Acknowledging such multiple interpretations of place caused my questions to evolve into those noted earlier in the article: How do the physical and symbolic locations established by the ESNM help to initiate and sustain cultural practices of musicking for Palestinians in the oPT? And how do those who participate in activities related to the teaching and learning of music through the ESNM interpret these experiences?

About the Author

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