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in Secondary School Music Classes

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Not Just a Matter of Style:
Addressing Culturally Different Musics as Social Praxes
in Secondary School Music Classes

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As the populations of the United States and Canada have become increasingly diverse in recent decades, musics of more cultural traditions than ever before have come to be heard in the public forums of the two nations. Simultaneously, growing numbers of students from different cultural backgrounds have entered music classes in the schools of the two nations, raising quandaries among music educators over what musics they should include in their classes and what approaches they should take to teaching them. At present, the questions of *Whose music should be included in music education?*[1] and *How should the different varieties of music be taught?* loom large for those teachers who seek to have their students engage with music as the culturally diverse phenomenon it is in contemporary Western societies, rather than focusing their instruction primarily on one tradition or perhaps a small number of related traditions, as most music teachers have done in the past.[2]

In the historically dominant modernist approach to music education in the United States and Canada, now usually called "aesthetic education,"[3] the musical artifacts of different cultures have been introduced in music classes—usually via performance instruction or listening lessons—as *works of art*, and their respective social meanings—religious, cultural, and political—have been downplayed or given relatively little attention. Instruction is generally focused on expressive qualities stemming from relationships among the "aesthetic"—or "felt"—components *within* musical works.[4] But, as many music educators are coming to discover, problems arise when they focus their instruction in this way rather than attending to the social origins of different forms of music-making and exploring their respective, culturally-situated values. Perhaps most notably, the conventional downplaying or bracketing of the social meanings of music has given rise to questions from parents, administrators, and others concerning the importance and value of music study in schools.[5]

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There are certain verities or "truths" music education scholars are coming to grasp that are at the root of what might be called the *praxial* turn—the recent re-orientation toward recognizing musics as context-specific social *practices*—in music education.[6] The most important of these was articulated succinctly by ethnomusicologist George List in 1971: "[T]he most universal characteristic of music is its non-universality as a means of communication. Whatever it communicates, is communicated to an in-group only, whoever they may be."[7] Indeed, music is *not* a universal language. In my experience, however, this "truth" is not yet recognized by or reflected in the teaching of many music educators in the schools.

The conventional downplaying of or inattention to the context-particular meanings of different musics in music education has led to situations in K–12 classrooms where the musics of different cultural traditions are included, but they are misrepresented, and where cultural misunderstandings and ironies are commonplace. I have related stories in my previous writings of students whose statements and musical decisions reveal the narrowness of their musical-cultural knowledge. For example, I told about a student of one of my associates in the United States who had emigrated from India, and who, upon hearing a Beethoven symphony for the first time, indicated that he liked what he heard because "Beethoven has good *raga*s."[8] (Readers not familiar with the word *raga* should know that it translates roughly into English as a "mode" or series of notes associated with a particular emotion or mood, which is used as a basis for improvisation in Indian classical music.) The student's comment reveals that he was evaluating Beethoven's music on the basis of criteria rooted in his own cultural heritage.

Not long ago, I observed a music class taught by a student teacher in a secondary school in which students were learning to compose, notate, arrange, and record their own music using synthesizers, computer sequencers, and sound sampling technologies. While most of the music the students made with this equipment was drawn from contemporary pop and rock traditions (and mostly in what I thought to be predictable ways), I noticed that the compositions produced by a couple of students actually reflected the unique musical-cultural traditions of their respective family heritages. However, other students using the same equipment incorporated sounds and forms from musical traditions of which they knew very little as they created their own compositions, sometimes borrowing from music they had heard elsewhere and setting it with their own lyrics. One young woman had set Christian

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lyrics to reggae in a song she was composing to perform at her church. When I spoke with her about it, I was able to determine that she had no awareness of the fundamental differences in the worldviews of Christians and Rastafarians (with whom reggae originated), let alone an intention of addressing such cultural differences in her composition.[9]

More recently, I talked with a student at another secondary school who was becoming frustrated trying to play on his guitar a section of a recording from a sitar performance. He was quite serious about using his developing knowledge of Western music theory as a basis for replicating the section of the sitar piece on his own instrument, evidently not having yet grasped the differences in the tuning systems of Western and Indian music (among other differences).[10] When I asked him if he knew much about Hindustani classical music he replied, "It's a really different style."

In all three of these cases, the students were quite unaware of the cultural incongruities and even ironies inherent in their comments and endeavors. But such ironies are often missed also by music teachers who themselves do not know much about the historical origins or have experience with the social contexts of the musics they are teaching their students to perform. When I have told these stories to some of the music teachers I know, a few of them have responded by saying sadly that the students' comments are not surprising. They have explained that teaching the social-cultural background of music is not something they personally have much time for in their classes, since parents and administrators have such high expectations for students' preparation of musical performances. Other music teachers have responded, "Does it really make much difference? At least the kids are learning to *make* music."

With these stories in mind, I want to do three things in this paper: First, I will explain briefly how pragmatist philosophy and semiotics provide a useful conceptual foundation for understanding the context-particular meanings of different musics, also accounting for how these meanings tend to be obscured in contemporary multicultural societies. With this foundation, I will explore the question of what might make it important for students to learn in their school music classes how different musics have come to be socially and culturally meaningful. Finally, I will address arguments that might be raised against teaching the socio-cultural and historical meanings of different musical traditions, and I will suggest approaches that could be taken by secondary school music educators to facilitate students' understandings of the personal, social, and sometimes even political meanings of different

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musics. My intent in all of these endeavors is to make evident how instructional practices could be modified or expanded in order that music education might have a "more clearly tangible and beneficial effect on the present and future lives of music learners, communities, and society at large."[11]

Pragmatist Philosophy, Semiotics, and the Context-Particular Meanings of Music

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, the originator of the philosophical movement known as *pragmatism*, had little interest in studying different cultures, yet his ideas had considerable influence on the development of the social sciences in the United States during the twentieth century.[12] Peirce also wrote very little about music. But viewing the human phenomenon of music through the lens of his pragmatist philosophy makes it possible to place different forms of musical engagement—the musical practices of different cultural communities—in a common frame of human experience, simultaneously allowing for each practice to be understood on its own terms.

Starting from the foundational premise that everything in the world is interconnected, Peirce made several important observations about human beings and human cognition. First, he observed that upon being born every human being develops a relatively unique set of habits—specific, that is, to her or his environment—for survival. On this basis, Peirce characterized different individual persons as "bundles of habits."[13] (Such habits are both "physical" and "mental.")

Peirce noted that communities of individuals living in the same or similar circumstances tend to have survival habits in common. Attendant to this, he observed that they collectively share a comprehensive concept or collective *abduction* of "the way the world is" (i.e., a shared "imaginative universe" or worldview). In his view, such communities are, in a sense, "loosely compacted persons," each having its own unique personality distinct from other communities. While communities might appear on the surface to be similar in many respects, they differ from one another in their cooperatively and habitually shared survival actions and beliefs. (In the terminology of contemporary cultural anthropology, such communities are, of course, called *cultural groups*.)

Turning to the matter of *meaning*, Peirce explained that an individual's thought or action in a community is typically regarded as "sensible" or "reasonable" by the members of that community according to whether they see it as having efficacy within the habitual

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survival actions of the community. In Peirce's words, "What a thing means is simply what habits it involves."[14] It is important to note that habits, in order to be construed as meaningful, must invariably be connected with the survival efforts of the community.

Since a community's shared conception of reality is inevitably partial and biased due to having its origins in its members' own efforts toward survival, all of the hypothesis-making and testing undertaken by the members of a community when they find themselves in doubt about "the way things are" or "what to do next" is inevitably rooted in their worldview. Thus, the ideas of a community must always be considered in terms of the *effects* they are conceived to have by the members of that community. Indeed, it is by looking at the *effects* of particular human ideas and practices within the context in which they arose that their use and import (or value) can be determined.

Given this brief sketch of Peircean pragmatism, we can draw the connection that the different human activities or practices involving sound by which we find ourselves surrounded in contemporary Western society—practices we mentally (and usually tacitly) bring together under the name "music"—in fact originated in different cultural contexts in which each contributed in some way to the survival or well-being of a community. This notion bas been borne out in reports of anthropological and ethnomusicological research*,* and it is congruent with the praxial conception of music advanced by philosopher Philip Alperson in 1991[15] that has since been elaborated in the writings of praxially oriented music education scholars.[16] Of course, it is important to note that, when considering the diverse forms of "music-making" undertaken by humankind, the traditional musical practices of longstanding cultural communities are only part of the picture. Indeed, new musics are constantly emerging, reflecting the movements of people from different cultural heritages into new cultural communities, each with distinctive concerns, interests, and preferences stemming from its members' shared worldview.[17] Furthermore, some people now have associations with more than one cultural community, due to geographical relocation, marriage, or other transforming life changes. Nevertheless, most people tend to sustain a uniquely strong attachment to one cultural tradition throughout their lives, and their participation in the music of that tradition is typically effective in helping them to make sense of their daily lives and supporting their associations with others of "like mind."[18]

Central to Peirce's pragmatic philosophy is his *semiotic*, a theory of cognition that, among other things, accounts for the ways different individuals tend to conceptualize a single

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phenomenon differently owing to their culturally rooted differences in "habits of mind." Peirce demonstrates that every thought or *sign* that registers in human consciousness involves an indivisible triadic relationship, the three aspects of which include a Sign (a perception), an Object (a conception), and an Interpretant (an effect in the mind of a perceiver that determines how a given perception will be formed as a conception according to the perceiver's "habit of mind"). Persons of one cultural community tend to conceptualize Signs as Objects differently from persons of another cultural community owing to differences in their respective, shared "habits of mind" (Interpretants).

Beyond this, Peirce developed a taxonomy of all the different types of sign relationships that may be present to the human mind. Within this taxonomy, the part most useful for our purposes is his classification of the potential relationship between Signs and their Objects. These include the following types:

- An *Icon* is a Sign that refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of qualities of its own. (Examples include a map, onomatopoeia.)

- An *Index* is a Sign that refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of its being "really affected by that Object." (Examples include smoke and fire, a symptom and its cause.)

- A *Symbol* is a Sign that refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of a social/cultural convention that cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object. (Examples include a word, a sign language gesture.)

Louis Hjelmslev, another semiotic theorist working later in the twentieth century,[19] provided a basis for understanding how *denotation* (a "direct indication," "definitional," or "literal" meaning of a sign of something) might give rise to *connotation* (a personally, socio-culturally, or ideologically associated or implied idea).[20] Hjelmslev explained that, in *first order signification* (denotation), a sign consists of a signifier and a signified.[21] In *second order signification* (connotation), a first order signification is the signifier of yet another signified. Understanding first and second order signification is helpful for grasping how the culture-particular meanings of different musics have become obscured in contemporary multicultural societies, as one general example and two music-related examples will serve to illustrate:

For those persons who speak English, the word 'fire' denotes a particular object, (i.e., the phenomenon of combustion manifested in flame, light, and heat). Fire is unwelcome in many contexts, as when a burning log rolls outside of the fireplace in one's home or when a

match is ignited near the tank openings in a gasoline/petrol station; its appearance in those places is a sign of danger. When one sees fire in such contexts, one knows that it "means" danger: One's options are to *extinguish the fire quickly* or *get away* to a safe place. Moreover, when English speakers use the expression "where there's smoke, there's fire," they are calling attention to the indexical relationship that smoke has with fire. Smoke "means" fire due to the causal relationship the latter has with the former. Beyond this, a smoke alarm is activated by smoke from fire; when particles in the smoke disrupt the ionization of oxygen and nitrogen taking place in the detection unit, they break an existing electrical current and activate another current to sound the alarm. We have learned that when one hears such an alarm, it "means" or denotes the presence of smoke. It is important to note, however, that when one hears the alarm and immediately recognizes that one may be in danger, the relationship between the smoke alarm sound and the sense of danger is one of *connotation*; the alarm *connotes* danger because the relationship between the alarm sound as signifier and the dangers associated with fire *presupposes intermediary steps of signification*. In other words, if you did not know that the sound of the alarm was a sign of smoke, that smoke was a sign of fire, and that fire can be dangerous, you wouldn't necessarily think that the loud, harsh sound of the alarm was a sign of danger. (A young, "uneducated" child would not make those connections.) Indeed, the association is clear only within a cultural context in which those relationships have been learned.[22] The table below illustrates the relationships.[23]

Signifier			Signified
Signifier		Signified	Danger!
Signifier	Signified	Fire	
alarm noise	smoke		

Likewise, some people associate the sound of a song played on the *shakuhachi,* the ancient Chinese bamboo flute, with traditional Japanese music. One piece from the canonical set of traditional pieces for the *shakuhachi*, *Sokaku Reibo* (also known as *Tsuru no sugomori,* "The nesting crane") involves imitating the sounds of a crane on the instrument, and when listeners recognize the sounds emerging from the instrument as the crane's song it is owing to the iconic relationship that the sounds played on the flute have with the call of the large bird. For those listeners, the sounds produced by the *shakuhachi* player in performing *Sokaku Reibo* "mean" or are an iconic sign of the "crane-song." Further, listeners who are familiar

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with the difficulty of playing the *shakuhachi* and its history recognize that the high level of mental and physical discipline needed to successfully produce sounds on the instrument led to its early use as a *hoki* or spiritual tool by *Fuke-shu* (a community of monks) for self-discipline (of mind and body) in Buddhist practice; for them, a performance of *Sokaku Reibo* "means" or is an indexical sign of Buddhist spiritual practice in Japan. But it is important to note that when one hears the crane-song played on the *shakuhachi* and recognizes it as Japanese traditional music, the relationship between the sounds produced on the instrument and the concept of Japanese traditional music is one of *connotation*: the bird sounds made on the *shakuhachi connote* "Japanese traditional music" because the relationship between the two *presupposes intermediary steps of signification*. In other words, if you did not recognize the sound of the shakuhachi as imitating a crane's song, that disciplining oneself to play the song of the crane on the *shakuhachi* was a spiritual practice historically undertaken by Buddhists in Japan, and that the sounds produced in that spiritual-musical practice had become tacitly adopted as part of the traditional music of Japan, you wouldn't know *what makes* those sounds a sign of Japanese traditional music. In fact, you might conclude that the unique quality of what you were hearing was just a matter of musical "style." Like the association of the smoke alarm sound with the danger of fire, the association is meaningful only within a cultural context in which these relationships have been learned.

Signifier			Signified
Signifier		Signified	"Japanese traditional music"
Signifier	Signified	Buddhist spiritual-musical practice	
Sokaku Reibo melody played on shakuhachi	Crane's song		

Similarly, the words "intra-tribal communication" describe a particular praxis that has been observed among the Kele people of Africa when they play their so-called talking drums, and some people recognize the sounds they make as a form of African traditional music. The Kele dialect of the African Bantu language can be drummed almost as well as it is spoken because it is a language of tones. The pitch relationships and rhythms of the language are sufficiently distinct that people who are too far apart to hear actual words can call back and forth to one another using only neutral syllables, replicating the tones and rhythms of the

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words they would employ in ordinary conversation. Likewise, the Kele play pitches and rhythms on the thick and thin sides of the talking drum to match the language, and can thus use the drum to communicate from even greater distances.[24] Within this tradition, a tonal, rhythmic pattern played on a "talking drum" could be used to signal "don't go in the house; stay outside" (with the implication that a leopard has been sighted in the area and might be in the house). But one who is not familiar with the language-related meaning of the patterns involved would not even recognize them as conveying a denotative message. Instead, the person who hears the playing of the drum as "African traditional music" might conclude that the formal qualities of the music he or she is hearing are just a matter of Kele musical "style."

Signifier				Signified
Signifier			Signified	"African traditional music"
Signifier	Signified		Intra-tribal communication	
Rhythmic and tonal pattern played on talking drum	"Don't go in the house"			

The upshot of all this is that one is unlikely to grasp the context-specific meaning of musical practices (or their products) from different cultural traditions unless one has learned (i.e., has acquired the "habits of mind") necessary to understand them on their own terms—that is, in terms of the meanings they carry (or carried) in their originating contexts. One needs only to explore and compare the differences of intention and effect in the frailing of banjo players in Appalachia, the chanting of the Solesmes monks near Sablé in France, and the emceeing of gangsta rappers in New York City to recognize that the different forms of what we in contemporary Western society bring together under the term "music" are undertaken for largely different purposes and with different effects in the cultural communities in which they have arisen. Indeed, we are now at a point in human history where, owing to the superabundance of music from numerous different traditions alive in multicultural societies, those of us who live in such societies tend to have considerable knowledge of musical connotations without ever having learned the previous levels of denotative signification upon which they are based.[25] Furthermore, like the student I cited at the beginning of this paper who was attempting to play a Hindustani sitar piece on his guitar, many of us tend to reduce inappropriately the radical differences in culturally disparate musics to matters of mere "style."[26]

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The contemporary English word "style" has its origins in the Latin word for a Greek and Roman writing implement (*stilus*), an instrument of communication, and the word developed over time to denote also a *manner* of writing (hence also of speaking). Applications of the word "style" have since expanded further to include references to a distinctive manner of musical or artistic expression undertaken by a cultural group or community in a particular epoch (as in "High North German Baroque style") or even by an individual (as in "Bill Evans' piano style").[27] It has been common throughout the modern era to regard different approaches to music making within the Western Art tradition (and related traditions) as variations of "style:" they reflect different manners or fashions of "emotional expression" stemming from evolutions and changes in conventional practices and technologies. For example, within the history of Western art music, studies of stylistic changes in the music of Claudio Monteverdi show his movement from using what he called *prima prattica* (first practice), the polyphonic setting of a text in which the text is largely subordinate to concerns of musical design, to *seconda prattica* (second practice), in which the meaning of a text motivates and dictates the musical attributes of the composition. Likewise, the compositional style of keyboard composers can be seen to have changed dramatically following 1700 when the new technology of Bartolomeo Cristofori's fortepiano began to supersede that of the harpsichord; it allowed keyboard players to effect dynamic changes according to the force with which they struck the keys on the keyboard for the first time and thereby to imitate more closely (i.e., to be more thoroughly iconic of) the emotionally expressive qualities of the human voice.

Now, use of the word "style" in reference to music may be quite suitable when it is used to describe evolutions and differences *within* particular cultural traditions, but, since not all cultural traditions share the same goals in their musical practices (such as "emotional expression"), the use of the word across traditions is inappropriate. In the first example I presented above, the monk from the Buddhist *Fuke* community was not seeking primarily to be emotionally expressive in iconically reproducing the sounds of a crane on the *shakuhachi*, but was rather using the instrument as a meditation tool. Likewise, the Kele drummer was not primarily seeking to reflect iconically the emotionally expressive qualities of the human voice for connotative purposes when he used the talking drum, but rather to iconically represent qualities of his spoken language to denotatively communicate a warning. Something similar could be said of the intentions of Sacred Harp singers in the rural southern United States, of

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the *bateria* in a Capoeira *jogo* in Brazil, or of persons who undertake a musical practice music in numerous other traditions: they are accomplishing context-specific, pragmatic purposes in their respective situations and are not at all concerned with "style." But the larger point is this: One is unlikely to grasp fully the culturally unique meanings of any musical practice or tradition unless one has acquired knowledge of and experience with the context-specific, pragmatic "habits of mind" associated with it.[28] And for that, one needs music education.

Why Learn the Social and Cultural Meanings of Different Musics?

With this background in pragmatism, semiotics, and the culture-specific nature of different musical practices in mind, I want to turn now to consider more directly the question of what might make it important for secondary school students in contemporary, democratic, multicultural societies to engage with musical practices from outside their own cultural realms of experience and to engage with the associated socio-cultural and historical meanings of those 'other' musics. One argument commonly made by teachers and others for the importance of music education in schools (especially by those who advocate music listening over performance) asserts that students who do not "learn how to listen" to music are in some measure culturally impoverished or deprived.[29] Some people have heard this argument so often that they are now inclined to dismiss it as little more than a platitude; others are even more put off by it because it has so often been used as a basis for including one particular musical tradition in school music programs to the exclusion of others. (The argument usually states or implies some variation on the theme "the uneducated listener needs to learn to appreciate 'good' music," and the musical/cultural bias of the speaker, often toward Western art music, is not always disclosed.[30]) However, the concept of "cultural deprivation"[31] that gained currency in the 1960s has taken on new meaning in recent years, as the need for cultural and political sensitivity in social situations has become more evident in societies characterized by increasing cultural diversity.

Political economist Francis Fukuyama argued insightfully and persuasively in *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* that the economic health of United States society (and, by implication, other multicultural, democratic nations) owes much to the *social trust* established among individuals who share cultural relationships, on the general public's understanding of the genuine differences among the cultural groups that comprise their society, and on the willingness of such diverse groups of citizens to cooperate and defer to the

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authority—the leaders, laws, and the judicial system—they collectively establish in the nation as their larger community.[32]

Extending Fukuyama's point, it is not difficult to see that individual citizens' acquired knowledge of the traditions of cultural communities other than their own (such as their musics) enables them to act in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways in different social circumstances: persons who are not equipped to act with such inter-cultural sensitivity in the increasingly diverse multicultural societies of the 21st century could also be described as "culturally deprived" in a sense, since they are less likely to get on well with persons of different cultural communities. Notably, owing to their unique roles as agents of socialization, educators in the arts and humanities in K–12 schools are likely the best-positioned, socially speaking, to foster such inter-cultural understanding among students from disparate cultural communities.

A second (and related) answer was provided by educational philosopher Harry S. Broudy in 1983. While Broudy's argument addressed learning in the humanities in general rather than music education in particular, it nevertheless has implications for music educators concerning instruction on the socio-cultural and historical meanings of different cultural groups. (It should perhaps be noted also that Broudy was a strong advocate of aesthetic education and highly elitist in many of his recommendations concerning arts education, but some of his ideas—including those I am about to describe—are remarkably pragmatic and thus more broadly applicable.)

Broudy drew distinctions between what he identified as the four "uses of schooling," contrasting *applicative* and *replicative* uses with *associative* and *interpretive* uses. He asserted that the uses of studies in the humanities—those branches of learning that investigate human constructs and concerns (such as philosophy, arts, and languages)—are not primarily applicative and replicative, but are rather associative and interpretive, and that such uses are highly important ones.

Broudy explained that *applicative* uses of schooling involve studying principles, laws, and generalizations about a class of phenomena which explain those phenomena by causal hypothesis and yield principles for controlling them. Technologies utilizing these principles have been invented to facilitate such control, and students learn to make desired changes affecting that class of phenomena by applying these technologies. *Replicative* uses of schooling, on the other hand, involve memorizing "constants" (i.e., frequently used information, such as multiplication tables) for long-term retention in order that they will not

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need to be recreated each time they are needed. Examples of both such "categories of use" are not difficult to think of concerning the "phenomena" presently introduced in most North American secondary school music classes: Students studying music performance usually gain knowledge of principles of vocal and/or instrumental tone production (concerning, for instance, the activation, vibration, and resonance of musical sound), and they typically learn to *apply* these principles for expressive purposes as they play or sing. Likewise, secondary school music students focusing on piano performance or composition typically memorize the fingerings or "spellings" of, for instance, full-diminished seventh chords in different keys, in order that they may *replicate* them when they need them for expressive purposes (and so they won't have to review the pitch relationships that define such chords every time they wish to play or write another one).

In contrast with the first two types, Broudy explained that *associative* uses of schooling involve the development of an "allusionary" reservoir of memories upon which students can draw for richness and flexibility of thought and feeling:

> The metaphor of an imagic-conceptual-linguistic store may be naïve (a fermentation vat might be more apt), but it helps to illustrate the associative use of schooling. Deposits in this store come from many sources, of which the school is only one. However, if school studies produce associations that otherwise might not occur, then they may have a use. If . . . the creative imagination fills, transforms, and draws on the store, it is a very important use indeed.[33]

Accordingly, *interpretive* uses of schooling exploit the imagic-conceptual-linguistic store for order. The conceptual schema or lenses that students acquire through studying an academic discipline (or, we might note, a particular cultural tradition) organize the apprehension of phenomena by imposing structure on them. Broudy explained that "[e]ach discipline . . . . yields a distinctive context of interpretation" and, long after we have graduated from school, "[w]e think *with* these residues of formal study, not *of* them." Emphasis on preparing students to use their music education for associative and interpretive purposes is not universal in music classes in North American secondary schools (and it is certainly eclipsed by focus on application and replication in many places) since, as I noted earlier, many teachers believe they do not have adequate time for teaching the social and cultural meanings of music owing to the expectations placed upon them for preparing student performances.

Extrapolating from Broudy's argument, it seems evident that students who choose to pursue music vocationally or as a serious avocational activity will likely apply and replicate what they have learned in musical performances throughout their lives, but students who do

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not continue to be personally engaged as music-makers after graduation may have no further need to apply or replicate what they have learned in music education courses. However, even those students who do not choose to pursue music professionally or avocationally will be able to draw from their engagement with the cultural and historical dimensions of music as a basis for cultural *associations* and *interpretations* throughout their lives, if such instruction has been integrated with performance instruction in their music classes. It follows, therefore, that time invested in the socio-cultural and historical dimensions of music is, for all students in music classes, time well-spent.

A third answer to the question of what might make it important for students to grasp the socio-cultural and historical meanings of the musics by which they are surrounded in contemporary society concerns the increasing use of music for purposes of psychological manipulation in contemporary multicultural societies. Indeed, students who have not learned to recognize how different forms of music reflect community-specific meanings are likely to be subject to social coercion, since music is now used purposefully by radio, television, and online advertisers and in-store marketers as a "semiotic association device," to entice customers to buy particular products. The supporting theory is that hearing a particular music reinforces potential customers' sense of unity with the culturally distinctive community that embodies that music (i.e., their own, or another group that they aspire to be associated with), and they are thus motivated to purchase items that reinforce their sense of identity with that community. This practice is ubiquitous in contemporary societies and has been shown statistically to be effective.[34] Students who have developed an understanding of the pragmatic efficacy of music will be more likely to think critically about the effects of different musics on them, recognizing culturally grounded musical practices when they encounter them and being more able to discern the ways the sounds of music from different communities are publicly exploited by commercial agents for profit.

All three of these answers to the question of what might make it important for secondary school students in contemporary, democratic, multicultural societies to engage with musics from outside their own cultural realms of experience—and to grasp their associated socio-cultural and historical meanings—stem from or are logically consistent with the pragmatic conception of music I sketched in the second section of this paper (after the introduction). Considered together, they suggest that acquiring understanding of the pragmatic efficacy of music and learning to engage with the socio-cultural meanings of

musics normally outside one's immediate realms of experience should be important aspects of secondary school students' education.

Arguments . . . and Approaches to Facilitating Students' Understanding

One argument that might be leveled against my suggestion that secondary school music education should be concerned with enabling students to engage with different musics as socially and culturally meaningful practices in particular cultural communities is that, given the diversity of musical practices in different cultures and across history, it would be impossible for any teacher to be sufficiently knowledgeable to impart to students a valid and up-to-date account of all of them. Furthermore, since new cultural communities are continually emerging with attendant musical practices, how could any teacher possibly hope to maintain accurate and up-to-date knowledge of such things? Indeed, the potential scope of instruction would seem to be impossibly vast.

Another argument might be raised by individuals familiar with semiotic theory-based dialogues in philosophy and literary theory of recent decades concerning the multifarious nature of cultural artifacts (e.g., literary works, musical artifacts) as *signs*, especially those dialogues that demonstrate the near-infinite ways in which particular signs can be (and are) interpreted. Indeed, one might think that the extraordinary variety in cultural forms of musical signification renders all musical meanings largely subjective, and that, as a result, secondary school music classes exploring the meanings of music might dissolve into gabfests in which students would debate different possible meanings of music endlessly to no particularly beneficial end.

Furthermore, many teachers would almost certainly argue (as I suggested earlier) that instruction addressing both musical performance *and* cultural meanings in secondary school music classes is not feasible, that there is just "not enough time" to do both, given the limited duration of their classes. I will address each of these arguments in turn.

First, it must be acknowledged that *no* teachers have the cultural and historical background to be able to address *all* musics in their classes. However, it would be quite possible for every secondary school teacher to introduce to her or his students the pragmatic conception of music I sketched in the second section of this paper and to help them to attend to the personal and social efficacy of the musical traditions that are present in the geographical area around their school. Once students are helped to see how particular musical

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practices have efficacy in their originating cultural contexts, they will be able to draw connections to others, and, with guidance, they will be able to explore beyond their own habitual (and likely narrow) musical associations to begin recognizing the context-particular efficacy of different peoples' musics. By entering into the diverse musical worlds of people and communities within and around the school, exploring more deeply the music of their own respective cultural communities, and engaging with the musics of their own regions and countries (gradually expanding their focus outward), students will be able to discover what makes different musics important to the different people who undertake them. While some music teachers may have limited skills for taking up such instruction at present, steps could be taken to modify teacher education programs to include instruction in more than one musical tradition to foster such development, and graduate education programs could be designed to provide such support for those currently working in the field.

Next, persons concerned that classes involving discussions of musical meaning might devolve into endless, circuitous conversations having no beneficial end need to realize that the members of a cultural community generally share common understandings—a general consensus—concerning the meanings of the musical practices they undertake in their own community.[35] Many such meanings are therefore *not* open-ended. Thus, such instruction would acquaint students with the meanings recognized by those who engage with particular musical practices, based on evidence such as I provided in the cultural examples featured in the second section of this paper. Endless debates over the possible meanings of particular musics would likely arise only in the classes of those teachers who continue to focus on "musical artifacts" as works of *art*, rather than engaging students in different culturally rooted musical *practices* and helping them to grasp the pragmatic effects they bring about for the people who undertake them in their respective contexts.[36]

Finally, it should be noted that concerns that instruction addressing both musical performance *and* cultural meanings is too time demanding to be feasible are most likely to be raised by those teachers who presently focus their teaching primarily (or exclusively) on musical performance. Such teachers need to realize that there is an important reason why expanding their instruction to include the musics of different cultural traditions and address their respective cultural meanings is not only advisable, but necessary:

As Peirce's pragmatic philosophy implies, cultural diversity is a fact of life, not a condition unique to our time. Both the United States and Canada are democratic, pluralistic

nations; each is comprised of numerous different cultural communities; and both nations have histories of establishing laws and policies to allow members of their constituent communities to maintain their unique cultural identities. Accordingly, contemporary sociologists have come to regard as outdated the modernist concept of a pluralist, democratic nation as a "melting pot," since the realities of "cultural pluralism" (or "multiculturalism") have largely surpassed intra-societal groups interested in promoting cultural assimilation. (The metaphors of "salad bowl" and "cultural mosaic" have long had greater currency in the United States and Canada).

The diversity of musical practices undertaken within a nation is a reflection of its cultural diversity, and, as I noted above, the different human activities or practices involving sound by which we now find ourselves surrounded in contemporary Western society (i.e., that we mentally bring together under the name "music") in fact have origins in different cultural contexts in which each contributes in some way to the survival or well-being of a community. Indeed, many musical practices are associated with religious practices, political movements, and other emotionally-charged, culture-particular activities and beliefs. For those who purposefully engage with them, the engagement generally serves to validate their worldview and to reinforce their cultural identity.[37] But music educators who focus exclusively or primarily on performance (or on listening for expressive qualities *within* musical "works") without also addressing community- or context-particular meanings, who do nothing to foster the sorts of associative and interpretive engagement I have discussed above, thereby promote the concept of all "music" as mere product or entertainment and thus *trivialize for their students the socially important subject they are charged with teaching*. Throughout the history of education in the United States and Canada, music has been inconsistently included in school curricula. Music educators' historical over-emphasis on performance and neglect of cultural meanings (however it has been rationalized) has no doubt contributed to the tenuous status of their own subject in school curricula.[38]

With all this background in mind, what would a secondary school music program designed to address the socio-cultural meanings of music look like in practice? Certainly, music educators undertaking such an approach would work first and foremost to get students engaged in music-making and listening, just as most music teachers do today. Educators in all fields know well that students who are *actively engaged* with a subject are far more likely to be motivated to explore it further, and the same is true of music. But once students have

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developed basic skills for engaging instrumentally and/or vocally with a musical practice that has currency in their local area, teachers would begin to organize their classes around the pragmatic account of music I presented above, helping students to undertake and explore *different musics* as dynamic social practices having social efficacy in different ways in particular cultural communities. Teachers would systematically include in their classes musics from communities that are represented in the population of the school and in the neighborhoods around the school (gradually expanding the circle), and they would provide students with opportunities to engage musically with those communities. They would not merely discuss with their students the histories of those communities' musical practices, but would engage musically with those communities, preparing and presenting concerts that feature their traditions, also collaborating with musicians from those communities in classes, rehearsals, and performances.[39]

To facilitate understanding of different musical practices, teachers could establish a series of questions for students to address to facilitate their systematic entrance into musical traditions that are new to them, based on the semiotic scheme I described in the second section of this paper (after the introduction). Addressing the questions raised in the following chart in order from left to right would enable students to approach new musical experiences with a pragmatic and humanistic orientation:

Signifier			Signified
Signifier		**Signified**	What is similar in my own experience? (Also: How is my experience of this action or event different, now that I understand it on the terms of those who practice it?)
Signifier	**Signified**	What is the larger social practice that the activity or event is a part of (i.e., of which I may not yet have knowledge)?	
A "musical" action or event perceived (i.e., What do I hear and see?).	According to those who "perform" it, what are the effects of the activity or event? (How do they conceptualize its pragmatic import?)		

In fact, it would seem worthwhile for students and teachers to return to the questions above repeatedly as they undertake, experience, and explore new musical traditions together. Indeed, by *exploring the pragmatic import* of musical practices of *particular* peoples in *particular* times and places and by considering connections to their own lives as they practice and perform the music with members of the traditions from which they stem, students will be

Goble, J. Scott 2010. Not just a matter of style: Addressing culturally different musics as social praxes in secondary school music classes. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 9(3): 8–34. Online: http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Goble9_3.pdf

able to make precisely the kinds of associative and interpretive connections suggested by Broudy, thereby becoming more musically and socially fluent—and simultaneously understanding the import of different musical traditions more thoroughly.

While some readers might be concerned that such an instructional approach might entail violations of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution owing to the likely inclusion of religious musics, [40] a practice of featuring diverse traditions in the curriculum would serve to allay concerns that a music program was advancing the worldview or purposes of any particular community. In fact, according to this pragmatic view, students would be encouraged to explore and draw personal connections among *all* of the musical traditions and practices they encounter outside of school, including those of their families and the cultural communities with which they are personally associated (e.g., religious, ethnic, national). [41]

Finally, students would be helped to recognize and explore how the musical practices of different cultural communities affect group cohesion (as in religious groups, social and political movements), and also gain an understanding of the strategies employed by individuals and organizations who use their knowledge of this effect for purposes of coercion and manipulation (as in advertising, marketing, and political contexts). They would learn how the musics of some cultural traditions are now being appropriated and manipulated by the entertainment and advertising industries, and become aware of how the musics they encounter via media and in the marketplace influence their own lives and those of others in ways they otherwise would not have considered.

Students in such a music program would gain tools both for beginning to "participate in" and for "listening *into*" the great variety of musics by which we all find ourselves surrounded in contemporary, pluralistic societies *and* come to know them—to experience them—as living practices undertaken by the members of particular communities for important pragmatic purposes. Once students begin to grasp how particular musics have pragmatic efficacy, how they do indeed "make a difference" in the day-to-day lives of culturally different people, there should be little question of the importance of music education for all students in the schools of contemporary, democratic, culturally pluralistic nations. Indeed, there are widely differing cultural worlds reflected in the great variety of musical practices undertaken in such nations, and, contrary to the apparent beliefs and current

practices of many music educators and their students, the differences are *not* "just a matter of style."

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Notes

[1] Western educators' egalitarian concern with deciding "Whose music?" to teach began in the 1970s, as evidenced by the eponymous book of the same decade. See Shepherd et al. (1977).

[2] A number of different approaches to multicultural music education have been proposed over the past century, and the number proffered has increased in the past decade. See especially Volk (1997) and Abrahams (2005).

[3] The terms "aesthetic education" and "music education as aesthetic education" gained notoriety through Bennett Reimer's book *A Philosophy of Music Education* (Reimer 1970), although many of the modernist concepts entailed by aesthetic education were implicit in the writings of music educators beginning in the 19th century.

[4] More specifically, the "absolutist expressionist" position described by theorist Leonard Meyer—which focuses on expressive qualities stemming from relationships among components *within* musical works—was adopted by Reimer. See Meyer (1956), 1–4, and Reimer (1970), 12–42.

[5] Witness the increase in attention given to advocacy for school music programs since 1990, especially in the publications and websites of MENC: The National Association for Music Education in the United States. The section of the organization's website dedicated to "Advocacy and Public Policy" is quite extensive:
http://www.menc.org/resources/view/music-education-advocacy-central

[6] Recent orientations in music education toward "music as praxis" originated in a paper by philosopher Philip Alperson, which music education scholars David Elliott and Thomas Regelski subsequently explored in their own writings in different ways. See Alperson (1991), 215–42. For more detail on the views of Elliott and Regelski, see Goble 2003, 23–44.

[7] List (1971), 402.

[8] Goble (2010), 106–17.

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[9]Goble (2008), 68–9.

[10]While both traditions divide the octave into twelve semitones, Western music uses equal temperament tuning and Indian classical musics (both Hindustani and Carnatic) employ just intonation (with further microtonal variations used to suit the mood of a particular *raga*).

[11]This was the charge raised in the call for papers for *MayDay Group Colloquium XX: Connecting School Music to the Community, Society, and Life: Curriculum, Policies, and Practices* at Boston University, June 5–8, 2008, which motivated the writing of this paper. An earlier version of this paper was presented at that colloquium.

[12]See Kilpinen (2000).

[13]Peirce (1931–35), 6.228.

[14]Peirce (1931–35), 5.400.

[15]Alperson (1991), 215–42.

[16]Noted scholars who have written significantly on "music as praxis" in the context of music education include Thomas Regelski, Wayne Bowman, and David Elliott.

[17]Commercial radio stations attend closely to the unique concerns, interests, and preferences of particular communities for advertising purposes, as demographers know well: "Most [commercial] radio stations play only a single form of music; a few stations play different music in different time slots. By narrowing their musical offerings, broadcasters hope to deliver an audience with known and desirable demographic characteristics to advertisers" (Zill and Robinson 1994, 25).

[18]Notably, some people stay connected with the same cultural tradition (i.e., develop musical preferences that they sustain throughout their lives) while others form different cultural attachments, especially in late adolescence or early adulthood. Related research is discussed by North and Hargreaves (2008, 107–11). A fascinating study of a special, sustained attachment by one segment of the United States population to the worldview of a particular musical artist (Bruce Springsteen) was conducted by Daniel Cavicchi (Cavicchi 1998).

[19]Louis Hjelmslev was a follower of Peirce's contemporary, Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist who developed a sign theory known as *semiology* at about the same time that Peirce was developing his semiotic. Saussure's semiology differs from Peirce's semiotic in several important respects, the most important of which (for the purposes of this paper) is that Saussure's sign is a dyadic entity (comprised of a *signifier* and a *signified*, meaningful within a single historical-cultural context), whereas Peirce's sign is a triadic entity (comprised of a *Sign*, *Object*, and *Interpretant* and thus useful for consideration of inter-cultural issues), as described above.

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[20]Hjelmslev (1961), 114–25. Roland Barthes famously applied Hjelmslev's concept to the analysis of a realist literary text, making Hjelmslev's model more widely known. See Barthes (1974), 9.

[21]In Peirce's terms, Hjelmslev's "first order" significations are either *iconic* or *indexical*. Thus, a denotative meaning would be readily agreed-upon by members of all cultural groups, whereas a "second order" signification is *symbolic* (i.e., referring to the Object it denotes by virtue of a social/cultural convention) and agreement would not be likely. It should be noted, however, that semiotician Kaja Silverman has drawn upon an argument of Louis Althusser to challenge the notion of denotative (iconic and indexical) signs' "naturalness." She has argued that when a child is learning language, "ostensibly learning denotation rather than connotation, he or she is already positioned within ideology." If so, denotative and connotative meanings are not cleanly distinct. Peirce himself admitted that "it is extremely difficult accurately and sharply to distinguish" the phenomenological categories upon which his tripartite scheme of signs (icon, index, symbol) is based. See Silverman (1983), 30. See also Peirce (1931–1935), 1.353.

[22]So, within Peirce's scheme, the alarm sound is a *symbol* of danger, since the association of the smoke alarm's sound with danger is a cultural convention grounded in a series of indexical relationships (i.e., relationships of contiguity) that may not be recognized by "outsiders."

[23]Philip Tagg helpfully drew the example of a smoke alarm to illustrate Hjelmslev's account of connotation, and I have borrowed it for my purposes here. See Tagg (1999).

[24]Carrington, John F. (1949/1969). Also see Ong (1977), 411–29.

[25]Sometimes we don't even have connotative knowledge; at those moments, the sounds may just seem like "noise."

[26]While the music recording industry has been primarily responsible for grouping of the sound artifacts of diverse cultural practices under the rubric "music" and describing their distinctive sonic characteristics as differences in "style," music educators have also been responsible. All world cultures do not share the word "music" nor do all of them have an equivalent word in their own languages.

[27]Note that references to "style" generally concern the manner of presentation, not the content that is expressed.

[28]In line with Peirce's semiotic conception, the pragmatic "habits of mind" to which I refer here are not merely those of music or language, but include all potentially engaged realms of embodied knowledge and semiosis, including the kinesic, proxemic, tactile, etc. (Incidentally, awareness of the complex and multifarious nature of semiosis brings to light the folly of online instructional programs in music education.)

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[29]Such arguments have been made at least since Frances Elliott Clark began to promote "music appreciation" for the RCA Victor Company in the early twentieth century (Clark, 1930), and they continue to be made today. See, for example, Gioia (2007).

[30]It is important to note that "Western art music" is another connotation, generally used to refer to a body of musical works that have been canonized over time for their historical importance by scholars in Europe and North America. Ironically, the canon (which is not catalogued anywhere, but is instead a tacit concept in the minds of certain specialists) includes scores and/or sound artifacts of social/musical practices that are largely unrelated and culturally distinct, as, for example, Gregorian chant and Karlheinz Stockhausen's aleatoric compositions. (Notably, however, the inclusion of chant and aleatoric composition in the canon and thus in the required curriculum for music students gives learning about both practices cultural-group meaning and academic consequence, so as social group markers for music students they are *not* unrelated and culturally distinct.)

[31]See, for example, Riessman (1962).

[32]Fukuyama (1995).

[33]Broudy (1983), 132.

[34]See, for example, Gorn (1982), 94–101; Milliman (1982), 86–91; and Dubé et al. (2006), 305–19.

[35]However, it is important to note that a musical practice that originated with one cultural group may be adopted by the members of another group who associate meanings with it that differ from meanings held by those with whom it originated. For example, when a contemporary listener expresses interest in "retro" popular music (i.e., music from a decade before he or she was born), her or his interest and pleasure likely stem from a fantasized nostalgia for that earlier era, rather than concerns still shared with the community or person with whom the music originated.

[36]This is not to suggest that there are or should be "final" answers to all questions of musical meaning. Indeed, sometimes it is better (instructionally speaking) to keep issues open, sometimes musical meanings are intentionally ambiguous, and, in any case, the community-based meanings of some musics are in the process of evolving.

[37]I present a more complete account of how music serves to validate one's worldview and to support one's cultural identity in my recent book. See Goble (2010), 45–110.

[38]I realize that the "bracketing" of discussions of religious and culture-particular meanings in the public forum (including school music classes) stems from the societal acceptance of the "aesthetic" concept that emerged in Europe around the time the United States was taking form as a nation, adopting freedom of expression, separation of religion and state, and adherence to democracy as guiding principles. Since then, the "aesthetic" idea has functioned

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in the United States and other democratic nations as an ideal, culturally neutral mental space within which the musics of different cultural communities can be considered intellectually in the nation's public forum, without necessarily attending to their context-particular cultural meanings. But now, as the populations of the United States and Canada are increasing in cultural diversity and the musics of particular cultural groups are being used for purposes of psychological manipulation in the public forum (as in advertising), the downplaying of the personal, social, and political meanings of music in the public forum and especially in education is straining the limits of the "aesthetic" concept. In my view, students need to be apprised of this in their music classes, and they also need to learn (in their Social Studies or "Civics" classes) the legal principles of social tolerance that citizens of the United States, Canada, and other democratic nations have adopted historically to handle problems that arise from cultural differences.

[39]I would not suggest such an approach if I were not confident that it could be implemented successfully. In recent years I have performed with my own secondary school, university, and community ensembles concerts focusing on the musics of particular cultural groups (such as "A Celebration of Jewish Music," "Joyeux Noël: Christmas Music of France and French Canada," "Reflections of Spain: Musics of the Spanish Diaspora in the Americas), on themes of experiences shared in common by different cultural groups (such as "To Free the Spirit: Songs of Oppression and Liberation"), and on the musics made by different cultural groups engaged in significant historical events ("Musics of the U.S. Civil War"). These concerts have included spoken, printed, and (on occasion) dramatic content addressing concerns of the cultural communities involved to facilitate the performers' and the audience's learning about them.

[40]The First Amendment to the United States Constitution (the first article in the "Bill of Rights") states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Hence, some U.S. citizens have come to believe that the public schools should not have anything to do with religion, even finding the academic study of religion there to be inappropriate.

[41]Music educators who might be concerned that the study of culture is beyond secondary school students' capability should know that the *Executive Summary of the Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* published by the National Council for the Social Studies in the United States lists the first of its ten central themes (for study) as *Culture*: "The study of culture prepares students to answer questions such as: What are the common characteristics of different cultures? How do belief systems, such as religion or political ideals, influence other parts of the culture? How does the culture change to accommodate different ideas and beliefs? What does language tell us about the culture? In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with geography, history, sociology, and anthropology, as well as multicultural topics across the curriculum" (National Council for the Social Studies 1994). Retrieved August 18, 2010 at: http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/execsummary

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