

(Re)centering Indigenous Perspectives in Music Education in Latin America

Héctor Miguel Vázquez Córdoba

University of Victoria (Canada)/ Universidad Veracruzana (Mexico)

[Translated by Janette Kristine DeLong]

Indigenous knowledge has been marginalized and excluded through a system based on a worldview that perpetuates colonialism. The actions and attitudes of nation-states and academic bodies deem, recognize, and value certain ways of knowing as “superior,” which marginalizes knowledge from Indigenous cultures. Considering an educational philosophy that puts the knowledge and worldviews of local cultures at its heart is an urgent step towards changing this situation. In this text, I discuss the implementation of Styres’s (2017) Land-centred philosophical proposal in music education. This approach is built on the understanding that Indigenous knowledge has the same value as knowledge that comes from hegemonic Western centres. This perspective proposes to disrupt the role of Eurocentrism that accepts or rejects different ways of knowing and (re)centers Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.

Keywords: *Land-centred philosophy, music education, Indigenous knowledge*

The Indigenous groups of the American continent have been systematically oppressed for centuries. From north to south, acts of colonization have occurred, the outcomes of which include the extermination of Indigenous groups and expulsion from and appropriation of their ancestral lands. Assimilation into the dominant culture contributed greatly to the irreparable loss of much culture and knowledge of the Indigenous peoples. Identities of the cultures that once flourished on the “new” continent (e.g., Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs) were re-envisioned through the lens of the colonizers, who classified these peoples as “primitive” in their Eurocentric view, and simply catalogued them under one name: Indian (Quijano 2000). The dominant social group, who holds the colonizer’s worldview, has the power to define itself and others, and at the same time, affirm or deny the identity of a particular group in the social context (Giménez 2000).

Different people and communities engage in musicking (Small 1998; MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell 2002); therefore, the appreciation or devaluation of their musics and ways of experiencing them offers a clear proof of the place that each musical expression holds within the social fabric. In this context, music with Indigenous roots is understood as having less value when compared with the European tradition, since the latter represents the colonizer worldview (Shifres and Gonnet 2015). The shadow of the colonizer remains in coloniality, which privileges a Eurocentric view imposed on the collective imagination of those who are considered dominated (Quijano 1992, 2000; Pujadas 2000; Rodríguez 2006; Rosabal-Coto 2013, 2014, 2016; Tutino 2000). Despite the importance of recognizing the origin of the inequalities that have historically been conceived and accepted as valid, it is even more important to envisage spaces from which concrete actions that promote the re-evaluation of Indigenous cultures and their knowledge can spring. Music education presents an opportunity to include perspectives from Indigenous cultures. It is not enough to merely include repertoire or instruments in a trivial way; instead, a meaningful collaboration with the bearers of cultural knowledge must be built.

This article takes a position based on a Land-centred¹ philosophy (Styres 2017), which places the perspectives and needs of Indigenous groups at the heart of the conversation, with the understanding that the knowledge that these cultures hold must be valued equally—neither superior nor inferior—to Eurocentric knowledge. The ramifications that this philosophy can have on music education in Latin America are also explored.

Features of Colonization in the “New” World

In Latin America, the term *Indigenous* (*indígena*) has been used to emphasize and indicate the condition of the colonized, who are systematically relegated to live on the political, economic, and epistemological margins (Garzón 2013). Given the bias that this term has in the particular context of Latin America, I believe it is important that the word *Indigenous* in this article be defined according to the view proposed by Wilson (2008), who returns to the Latin roots of this word meaning “born of the land” or “that springs from the land,” with the purpose of presenting another view of the term that reflects a close relationship between the people and

their surroundings (physical place), while, at the same time, counteracting the rhetoric that this word implies in its derogatory sense.

Indigenous peoples and their cultures have been threatened since the arrival of European colonizers on the American continent. From the Eurocentric perspective, the American continent was a new world, one that did not exist until its discovery by the European colonizer, who took responsibility for populating and providing culture to territories that lacked them (Quijano 2000; Styres 2017). In addition to being based on political and military power, colonization processes in Latin America also involved a symbolic colonization of a religious nature, supported by the Catholic Church. Saving the souls of the Indigenous peoples became the perfect excuse to justify the occupation and exploitation of the land of those who were considered savages (Rosabal-Coto 2016; Sturman 2016). Indigenous peoples suffered cultural genocide (Quijano 1992) through the repression of their worldviews and through brutal oppression and extermination from the diseases that the colonizers spread. It is not possible to identify only one process of colonization to explain historical occurrences around the continent or the repercussions that remain from the imposition of ways of understanding the world that opposed the perspectives of Indigenous cultures. It is beyond the scope of this text to describe the processes of conquest that occurred around Latin America, nor can it fully explain the consequences that these processes had on diverse cultures and culture bearers. Given this limitation, the approach here is that of a general perspective, one that presents a starting point for discussion of the issue.

In the case of the territories occupied by the Spanish Empire, the colonizers used Indigenous populations as a workforce. To do so, they made use of the servant-master relationship structures that existed prior to colonization. Through this practice, the Spanish secured for themselves the payment of a tribute, negotiated through the Indigenous elites; in return, the latter retained a certain level of control over the territories and the rest of the Indigenous population (Beaucage 2000; Quijano 2000; Tutino 2000). This practice favoured the continuation of chieftainships² that existed prior to European arrival, as well as the formation of new chieftainships within the Indigenous populations. This allowed the colonizers to control vast areas of land with a relatively weak presence of Spanish Crown representatives. Beaucage (2000) states that the Portuguese colonizers, in the territory that is now Brazil, first oppressed the Indigenous populations by using them as a workforce, but eventually chose to exterminate and displace the native populations and

to replace them with slaves brought from Africa. For Tuck and McKenzie (2015), the colonizer views Indigenous cultures as something from the past, extinct, without a place in the present time: “Settler colonialism wants Indigenous land, not Indigenous peoples, so Indigenous peoples are cleared out of the way of colonial expansion, first via genocide and destruction, and later through incorporation and assimilation” (66).

The fact that the former Spanish and Portuguese colonies obtained independence did not better the situations of the Indigenous peoples. In the particular case of the nation-states that were formed in Latin America, various ways to promote a sense of national identity existed. Native cultures were absorbed into an imaginary unified by a nationalism created and supported by the middle classes and the intellectual elites, who called themselves liberals and who continued to see in Europe, and subsequently in the United States of America, models to follow towards modernity. From this perspective, modernity has as a base the concept of democracy and ever-more thriving capitalism, in which the privatization of land and its resources is a fundamental part of development (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Pujadas 2000; Quijano 2000; Rodríguez 2006; Rosabal-Coto 2013, 2014, 2016; Tutino 2000). The interests and needs of Latin American Indigenous populations are relegated to a level of minor significance, given that in terms of the makeup of different nation-states, the goal is to incorporate the Indigenous sectors of society into an economic, social, and cultural national project that in practice denies the Indigenous cultural matrices in favour of the values and views of the creole and Ladino³ elites in the Western style (Pujadas 2000, 115).

Quijano (2000) notes four historical trajectories and ideological lines that are possible to identify in nation-states in the global south of the continent. These trajectories have as an objective the creation of societies in which cultural homogenization, based on an identity constructed through supposedly common historical experiences, is implanted into the collective imagination. The first of these trajectories refers to a process of decolonization/democratization belonging to radical revolutions in countries like Bolivia and Mexico, whose effects were increasingly limited in the 1960s and 1970s. The second is related to countries like Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, that turned to attempted racial homogeneity by receiving millions of immigrants from Europe—an attempt to create an abrupt change to “white” identity. The third has to do with the quest for a cultural homogenization based on “the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples, African descendants, and

mestizos” (237). The author in this case names countries like Peru, Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, and Bolivia. The fourth and final refers to a discrimination towards people of African origins in countries like Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. This discrimination exists at the same time as these countries claim to advocate for “racial democracy,” which only serves to hide the discrimination that the aforementioned populations experience.

The Eurocentric View of Knowledge

The culture brought to Latin America from Europe was represented as the pinnacle of cultural evolution (Rosabal-Coto 2016; Quijano 2000), viewed as the reflection of the future of all other societies and cultures, as the advanced form of the entire species’ history (Quijano 1992, 18). All other cultures were classed as primitive or exotic. This gave rise to a discourse that advocated for the adoption of principles aligned with European culture, which was viewed as a universal cultural model to which non-European cultures should aspire (Mignolo and Walsh 2018), and that had as its pillars “Christian theology to European secular philosophy and science, all traced back to the Renaissance” (Rosabal-Coto 2016, 27).

The concept of *coloniality* explains a pattern of power that transcends territorial control through coercive properties of colonialism, given that coloniality leads to a form of control on a global scale that imposes on the collective and epistemological imagination. This control is built on the idea of race and division of labour, upon having a certain part of the global population playing the role of dominator over another that is historically defined as dominated (Garzón 2013, 2018; Quijano 1992, 2000).

Quijano (1992) states that one feature of coloniality is a form of knowledge production framed by “European rationality/modernity, which was established as a universal knowledge paradigm” (14). The author notes that this way of knowing based on the rational creates a separation between the subjects/individuals that constitute themselves through their capacity for reflection, and the object, which is external to the individual and whose function is to be studied and defined by the subject. The role of object is given to non-European cultures, which must be studied and defined through the dominant culture (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano 1992). In turn, the Western perspective proposes the scientific model as the only way to access knowledge, given that distancing the subject from the object implies

that the resulting product will not be “contaminated,” and a superior and true knowledge will be produced. Therefore, any other knowledge that does not conform to these standards will be considered inferior, pre-scientific, pre-modern, or traditional (Garzón 2013, 316). The superiority credited to the scientific model consequently discredits other forms of relating to and accessing knowledge. If there is a departure from a Eurocentric view of knowledge, it is considered tribal, exotic, and primitive; it confers a stigmatized identity to those who represent the non-Western, who are pushed into a collective imaginary of third-class citizens, and who must assimilate into the colonizing culture (Devalle 2000; Giménez 2000; Quijano 2000; Thekkevallyara 2013).

The power structure that results from coloniality provides the framework upon which the global system of exploitation, discrimination, and distribution of capital and labour is based (Quijano 1992). According to Garzón (2013), coloniality transcends colonialism and imperialism, given that “it persists in the postcolonial era ... it is projected in the media, in the educational system, in everyday language, etcetera, but, above all, it has been incorporated into the *habitus* of the colonized subjects” (311–12). This state of affairs poses a challenge in identifying which patterns are accepted as normal in society, products of practices that have become part of the everyday in an almost invisible way, perpetuating the narrative of the dominant culture.

An important part of western European control over the rest of the world rests in the power of the capital-salary relationship: Europe and the European form the centre of the capitalist world (Quijano 2000, 208). While western Europe becomes the global centre of the flow of capital, other geographic zones (including Latin America) are exploited both in their natural resources and in their workforces, this last under the justification that the workers belong to an inferior class that does not merit any economic reward (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano 2000). These relationships of possession of capital in turn affect the future of Latin America, which plays a role on a global scale as a provider of raw materials and a consumer of knowledge (Albán 2008).

Representation of Musical “Knowledge” and Musical “Being”

In the framework that coloniality lays out, music can be used as an object that contributes to underlining the differences between what is claimed to be the most

advanced form of culture and the rest: non-Western cultures. In this way of thinking, music of European origin, particularly classical music, is the model under which all other musics should be observed and analyzed. These “other” musics are classified as *world music*, a category which gathers all musics that, from a Eurocentric perspective, are considered to be different from the music that represents European culture (Bradley 2012; Hess 2015, 2017). Concepts like writing music—which symbolizes the capacity of abstraction of sounds and rhythms in a score—as well as the appreciation of music through cognitive processes where the player and the audience have no interaction during the musical act, are fundamental in being considered a “superior” form of art (Emmerson 2000; Goble 2015; Shifres and Gonnet 2015). Considered a producer of raw materials, Latin America is not a guiding force in the area of highbrow music, because of which it is “necessary” to import musical forms from Europe that contribute to the provision of culture to the conquered territories (Shifres and Gonnet 2015).

With the consolidation of independence movements in Latin America, the Catholic Church, which historically had provided formal musical instruction, was replaced by conservatories (Shifres and Gonnet 2015; Sturman 2016). In these institutions, a model of instruction aligned with the separation between subject and object is reproduced, caused by coloniality, where the subjects can understand the object (music) only through their individual effort. The aforementioned approach contributes to a system of competency in which the acquisition of knowledge becomes a personal task that privileges the individual over the group (Shifres and Gonnet 2015). According to Shifres and Gonnet, the conservatory model drove the process of secularization of music education, and subsequently the process of musical specialization (of the musical profession) (58). Using the standards provided by conservatories as representative institutions of the dominant culture, it is possible to institute a “superior” form of approaching music, and thusly to devalue forms of interaction with music that are not aligned with the parameters that said entities outline.

With the conservatory model governing interactions with and through music, this institution also holds the power of cataloguing (separating) musicians (formed through formal and institutional instruction) from the non-musicians. The musics that are not produced or reproduced within the conservatory model pass to a musical periphery, and with these musics, also pass the people who hold knowledge of them. Music as an object of art creates a gap between those who are recognized

as musicians (literate) and the non-musicians (illiterate), which restricts the social duty of a musician to the role of musical interpreter for the expert critic (limited to those with certain cultural capital), and leaves aside the “other” practical musicians who are not valued because there is a lack of academic validation of the importance of such musical practices in more informal and practical contexts (Bourdieu 1984; Ruddock 2017; Shifres and Gonnet 2015). The former situation leads to questioning the role of music education as a way to teach music as an “object” worthy of appreciation merely from an aesthetic approach informed by a Eurocentric-universalist view. Instead, there is an opportunity in music education to relate to music beyond an abstract view of knowledge, which requires direct contact with those who produce said music and understanding the contexts and worldviews where these originate (Bradley 2012; Goble 2010, 2015); otherwise, it runs the risk that in classroom settings, “class members may misinterpret the meaning of a lyric or find something about the music to be objectionable, distasteful, boring, or even ridiculous because it seems contrary to their own values” (Goble 2010, 5).

For Bradley (2012), appreciating music based only upon aesthetic characteristics fosters a division between Western music and the rest of musics, given that the first is considered superior and represents aesthetic values and sophistication that are valued in a Eurocentric perspective. This aforementioned state of affairs reflects the urgency of finding ways to break ideological colonialism that excludes ways of understanding music (Shifres and Gonnet 2015); this ideological colonialism discriminates against and undervalues specific ways of relating to and through music.

The Importance of Looking Towards Indigenous Cultures

In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations 2008). This document contains 46 articles that emphasize the basic needs of Indigenous peoples in support of respect for their customs and identities, because the effects of colonialism have severely violated their rights for centuries. In this text, I refer specifically to Article 15, Section 1, which states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information” (7). It is particularly important to note that Indigenous cultures must be visible in public

education, maintaining and promoting traditions and customs. This serves to create spaces for dialogue about how cultural diversity could be promoted through education, and particularly, music education. For this to occur, one must look to local cultures and culture bearers in order to establish a collaborative relationship that includes spaces to learn about and from their musics and worldviews.

Regarding the particular domain of music, it is crucial to define what Indigenous music means in diverse contexts in Latin America. It is important to note that this text will not cover the totality of the contexts of Indigenous musics in the global south of the continent; however, looking at some examples from diverse studies supports the discussion of this topic.

The word *music* is a term imposed on the native peoples of the American continent (Sturman 2016). Indigenous cultures do not view music as merely an act for entertainment; instead, it is connected to rituals in which music is a channel to connect to energies and deities, it is closely tied to dance, and the musical act is part of a collective and social network (Bermúdez 2010; Martínez 2002; Sturman 2016; Pacheco 2016). Although colonization directly impacts the ways in which people relate through music, different characteristics remain in the musical practices tied to Indigenous roots. The mixing between Indigenous and European peoples, as well as the teaching and use of instruments of European origin, resulted in Indigenous populations adapting and adopting different instruments in order to conserve features of the local musics and cultures within a new reality imposed by colonization (Bermúdez 2010; Sturman 2016). In the following, I present two cases in which the authors discuss Indigenous music in both the northern and southern parts of Latin America. These examples address the theme of “authentic” representation of Indigenous cultures.

Martínez (2002) analyzes the situation of Mapuche music in Chile. The main topic of the analysis is the conflict between representation of the culture and reproduction of the culture. Representation, the author comments, is based on an expectation, both inside Mapuche culture and in the dominant mestizo view of what *should* be Mapuche, since going outside of the bounds of what Mapuche should be is considered to be inauthentic. The mestizo culture expects a folkloric representation of the cultural roots that define being Mapuche, based on spectacularizing what constitutes a new form of dependence on the hegemonic culture. By establishing them in an exclusive way, these groupings create a paradigm of what is “Mapuche,” to which all the individuals in the group must conform (32). The

author calls upon the reader to reflect on the transcendence and the importance of maintaining the reasons behind the rites and ceremonies—to go beyond tokenism or only to look at the superficial. These rites and ceremonies favour the reproduction of culture through maintaining dialogue about its meaningful anchors like *ways of doing, saying, and feeling Mapuche*, more than for the exhibition of particular signs of fossilized *mapuchidad* [or being Mapuche] (32). This definition of being Mapuche is a clear indication that Indigenous cultures are not static; the imposition of dogmas about being authentic and traditional has more to do with external factors that come from the dominant culture and its expectations about an “authentic” Mapuche.

Sturman (2016) states that in the particular context of Mexico, Indigenous music is not what is heard in archeological zones—music that, in a way, romanticizes an ideal of what is Indigenous. By contrast, music with Indigenous roots is present in diverse spaces of public life, where musicians, in addition to being specialists in music-making, also participate in other activities. The author states that in Mexico, Indigenous groups succeeded in conserving their heritage and cultural traditions through adopting Christian practices, which allowed them to maintain features of their culture in a syncretic way:

It may seem ironic that native people appropriated the victory of conversion, but claiming that victory as theirs, adapting Christian and European formats to retain select native religious beliefs and cultural practices, provided a measure of control over their customs and space to create their own interpretations. (95)

This is particularly reflected in the adoption and adaptation of certain instruments and musical forms that originated in Europe. Sturman especially emphasizes examples like those of the Mixe peoples in the state of Oaxaca, where wind bands made up of Indigenous Mixes, once utilized only for religious purposes, eventually transformed into entities closely linked to the social fabric of the region’s villages; they have converted into significant institutions of leadership and representation in the communities.

Decentering Hegemonic Ways of Knowing

To put Indigenous needs at the centre and to promote their ancestral cultures through music education, I would like to reference what Sandra Styres (2017) proposes in her book, *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous*

Thought in Education. The author sheds light on the issue that arises through establishing educational principals that recognize Indigenous heritage in a system designed to perpetuate colonial power relations. She also analyzes the possibilities for transforming educational practice and for placing the needs of Indigenous peoples at the centre of the conversation, in accordance with the goals of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Styres analyzes the function of Indigenous knowledge with regard to the concepts of colonization and decolonization. For the author, colonialism has to do with the conquest of the land and goods of other people. This definition redefines the role of the conquered within the social structure that results from the colonization process, which includes the exploitation and sale of natural and human resources. For Styres, the term *decolonizing* refers to an active process in which a person who experiences the consequences of colonization tries to liberate oneself from the colonial yoke in order to attain independence or sovereignty; *decolonization* may be understood as a destination or result of the decolonizing process.

Styres explores three possible paths for achieving decolonization. In the first, the colonizer leaves the occupied territories, and with this action, removes every means of promoting colonial relationships. In the second, the colonizer concedes political and economic sovereignty to the colonized groups without the departure of the colonizer. A third path requires an act of resistance to the colonizer's power, which involves the colonized taking actions—in many cases, violent actions—in quest of their rightful freedom, moving from being oppressed to being the oppressor. Styres reflects as well on a theme also explored by Smith (2012) and Kovach (2009): the possibility of truly talking about a postcolonial state when colonial relationships surround various contexts of life for Indigenous peoples. Smith (2012) repeats Bobbi Sykes' words, "Post-colonial can only mean one thing: the colonizers have left" (101). Styres (2017) notes that it is not possible to speak of a "post" when colonial relationships still exist and adapt to new contexts.

Styres feels that it is necessary to provide a theoretical framework for reference based on the worldviews and needs of the Indigenous peoples, one that does not have a direct relation with the viewpoint that the colonizer imposes, when the colonizer acts as a mediator who defines and gives value to the knowledge that comes from Indigenous peoples and their worldviews. "Yet decolonizing, while desired in principle, is a process that, by its very nature is continually (re)centring colonial

relations—the hamster caught in a never-ending wheel of repetition and replication” (35).

From Styres’s perspective, Land-centred philosophy identifies and at the same time, “(de)centre[s] colonial relations while privileging and (re)centring Indigenous thought and focus on the philosophies of *lethi’nihsténha Ohwentsia’kékha* (Land)” (123). Land-centred philosophy, as a philosophical and theoretical concept “compromises circularity, understandings of self—in relationship, language, storying, and journeying as a central model for interpretation and meaning making” (38). From this perspective, an individual is not an isolated identity. Circularity involves the interconnectivity between the cosmos, the land, the human, and the non-human. Orality, as a form of sharing knowledge, is a fundamental part of Indigenous traditions, as it puts the culture bearers’ thoughts and ways of understanding the world at its centre: “Stories cannot be separated from the land that holds those stories or the interconnected relationships that formed them” (39). Through oral stories and histories, Indigenous peoples explain how they were created on the land and from the land, contrasting with colonizer histories which tell of their arrival in a territory (Styres 2017; Tuck and McKenzie 2015). From this, an important feature of the concept of land (place) can be deduced. This is opposed to the concept of property, coined from the colonizer’s view, where the human-land relationships are “redefined/reduced to the relationship of owner to his property. When land is recast as property, place becomes exchangeable, saleable, and stealable” (Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 64). Where the occidental viewpoint defines a physical space (e.g., river, mountain, forest) as a property that should be exploited to generate income, Indigenous cultures see places as those where they have traditionally lived and which represent their stories, histories, and ceremonies. Styres (2017) exemplifies the Indigenous concept of land and place by noting that when an Indigenous person asks another from which clan they come, a reference is made to clay, which involves asking from which land they come, with all of the connotations that the term *land* involves. Therefore, there is great importance in the stories, histories, and the oral tradition to (re)center knowledge in a particular place, which is not interchangeable or replaceable by an area of land which has exactly the same proportions. Directly tied to stories and histories, language is an important agent of knowledge in Indigenous cultures, since it acts as a mechanism that is “the basis for understanding Indigenous thought, which includes storied connections to land, as well as constructions of identity and community” (29).

According to Wilson (2008), knowledge “cannot be owned or discovered but is merely a set of relationships that may be given a visible” (127). Therefore, from the Indigenous perspective, knowledge or truth cannot be something isolated, since reality is “in the relationship that one has with the truth” (73). Thus, the construction of knowledge should be understood as a social process, not as a fact that is separate from the individual and based only on the intellect; instead, it also includes emotions, intuition, praxis, and spirituality (Chilisa 2012; Kovach 2009; Styres 2017; Wilson 2008). A way to honour knowledge as something that is not possessed in an individual way is through naming the person or people from whom one has learned, and at the same time, sharing the knowledge while remaining as loyal as possible to the ways in which the knowledge was received. Therefore, from an Indigenous perspective, the credibility of what is explained or taught is assured (Chilisa 2012; Kovach 2009; Wilson 2008).

Styres (2017) notes that knowledge based on Indigenous philosophies does not represent a forgotten past; instead, the knowledge is still relevant and adapts to contemporary realities. The author feels that authenticity in ways of knowing is based on concepts that go beyond time or space (be it rural or urban), since knowledge, when shared, must be “transmitted in ways that are emotionally and relationally appropriate, significantly relevant, purposefully, and mindfully respectful, as well as ethically responsible” (84). Laying out basic and fundamental aspects that steer the processes of transmission of knowledge also allows for flexibility in the ways of guiding learning. In doing so, the knowledge is not limited to static forms that contribute to a folklorization of what Indigenous knowledge should be and represent.

Land-centred Philosophy as an Educational Proposal

Styres (2017) reflects on Western education, which has as one of its objectives to “ideologically prepare students for appropriate and effective citizenship” (97). School has a mission to promote a number of beliefs that support a single truth, which spills over into a nationalist ideology. This mission follows the Newtonian-Cartesian rationalist way of thinking that “reduces education and learning processes to a series of factors or elements leading towards a universally predetermined outcome—all else is deemed irrelevant (111).

Styres continually emphasizes that the Land-centred model is not an attempt to compete or be recognized as valid by the Eurocentric perspective, and it recognizes the challenges to which this approach leads in academic settings, given that said settings are the gatekeepers of what is considered true knowledge. A significant point in this proposal is the creation of *ethical spaces* (Ermine 2007), since these allow for dialogue between two distinct life philosophies (in this case, Indigenous and western), through which it is possible to find a neutral space where “power relations cease to exist and the ensuing dialogue provides a way for confronting and resolving the conflict” (Styres 2017, 28). Moreover, she adds that in the education setting, this implies “two distinct but egalitarian knowledge systems coexisting and working together” (137). To accomplish this, the author calls for the creation of ethical spaces in education in which both teachers and students can establish a dialogue that respects and promotes equity between different ways of knowing, relating to each other through the dialogue process.

I propose to envision an education from the Indigenous perspective, based on the idea that people, culture, and their worldviews are dynamic, that the interaction between the spiritual world and natural world (Land) are necessary to live in harmony. The educational process does not exist in isolation, but instead, invites learning with the community in an active practice in keeping with the social context, and in which Elders have an important role to mentor Indigenous youth. All of this involves stories, histories, myths, legends, ceremonies, and lived experiences, thus contextualizing the educational process.

Applying the Proposal in the Context of Music Education

From the perspective of a Land-centred educational philosophy, the results or goals are not the most important; instead, the process is principally valued. This marks a difference in relation to the directives that educational systems currently follow, principally, because educational systems on a global scale are based on stipulations by different international organizations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (García 2012). The aforementioned approach to education is based on the argument that it promotes a standardization of knowledge that is in accordance with the needs of a globalized world; however, this argument does not recognize social, political, and economic contexts that exist in the different countries

where standardized tests are run—tests like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Favoring an imposed hegemonic view on the value of a certain type of knowledge becomes the perfect excuse for leaving aside other ways of knowing, particularly those that represent worldviews that have historically been undervalued and stigmatized.

If educational systems have as a main objective that students obtain the best scores on standardized tests, they favor the result over the process. If, in contrast, the process is the fundamental part of the educational act, then *how* one arrives at the results becomes the axis upon which to turn from a process of instruction to one of education. Bowman (2002) is clear in differentiating between instruction and education. On the one hand, instruction is identified as the process of mastering certain skills with the goal of functioning in a determined context, for which the majority of abilities are not necessarily transferrable to other areas of life. On the other hand, education not only equips people to carry out diverse tasks, but also “creates people who have not only the capacity but the inclination to question, to look at things from various perspectives, and who are aware of the partiality and fallibility of all such perspectives, their own included” (66).

Proposing education based on Land-centred philosophy goes beyond developing skills for playing Indigenous music—it becomes essential not to limit learning only to the use of the instruments or repertoires (or adaptations) of music with Indigenous roots. Even though this approach might promote local cultures in some ways, it remains a trivial representation that does not contribute to meaningful change that promotes Indigenous cultures equally with the dominant culture (Bradley 2012; Hess 2015, 2017; Locke and Prentice 2016). Land-centred philosophy provides an opportunity to view the world in a different way and thus identify inconsistencies that encourage new directions in thinking. These new directions in thinking question the principles that we take as given and valid and confront society’s prejudices that have led to the widespread marginalization of Indigenous peoples.

Considering the main forms of production and transmission of Indigenous knowledge from a Land-centred philosophy allows for valuing Indigenous knowledge on its own merit without the need to look for a justification or validation from a western viewpoint. This approach opens a space so that teaching music with Indigenous roots is valued for its own merits, with the purpose of becoming a fundamental part of music education.

The proposal to incorporate Indigenous worldviews through music education is not exclusive to one level of schooling or educational model in particular. This proposal is more precisely a call to educators of all levels and a variety of disciplines to reflect on the importance of including the perspectives of local cultures in their teaching practices. The mentioned principles and reasons for using music as a means to learn more about Indigenous worldviews is just one of the many ways that one could meaningfully learn from and about local cultures. The use of music as a means of learning about Indigenous knowledge is considered important because it features being relationally and emotionally appropriate, meaningful, and relevant, with the goal of ethical promotion of culture (Styres 2017). In this sense, it is crucial to establish collaborations with culture bearers, in particular with musicians and Elders who have a deep understanding of Indigenous knowledge and traditions tied to music-making, in order to develop meaningful learning experiences (Archibald 2011; Locke and Prentice 2016). It is important to remember that Indigenous cultures are alive and part of current contexts (Martínez 2002; Styres 2017). Respect for their principles cannot be based only on aesthetic aspects that folklorize and fossilize practices that represent an idealized view of the local culture. Such an approach leaves aside the basic principles that may be less evident at first glance—principles that represent deeper concepts—ways of doing, saying, and feeling that are part of the culture (Martínez 2002). Given these facts, it is absolutely necessary to be in contact with culture bearers so that we can be guided based on their experiences, in order not to assume an ethnocentric view of what constitutes an authentic experience. Assuming from an ethnocentric view what is authentic (or not) contributes to an image of what is “ideal,” which is detrimental to the self-determination of Indigenous peoples, to how they would like to be seen, and to the core principles of their cultures.

The incorporation of principles from local cultures in music education can contribute to achieving what has been set out in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, in particular, Article 15, Section 1, on the right of Indigenous cultures to be represented in education and public information. As previously noted—and I would like to emphasize—this means going beyond solely adopting instruments and repertoires. Conversely, it means that music education must go farther than just musical instruction, to become a means to value local cultures, particularly when that value is based on Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing.

Possible Challenges for the Implementation of a Land-centred Philosophy in Music Education and Paths to Starting

I am aware that proposing the adoption of a philosophy based on Indigenous cultural principles may generate resistance both at a social level and in the educational setting given that, as discussed in this text, Indigenous worldviews have been systematically ignored. Faced with this resistance, it seems a titanic task to begin with concrete actions to create room for parallel ways of knowing, particularly in the work of music education; therefore, I believe that it is pertinent to identify the internal and external causes that may affect the launch of a Land-centred philosophy in music education, especially in the Latin American context.

Internal causes

Internal causes are those which influence the music educator's decision not to adopt an approach which, in some way, goes against the manner in which they envision the musical act and music education.

- 1.** Many music educators have been formed through an educational system that focuses on the transmission of knowledge through theory associated with classical music, considered the only valid means of connecting with music. Therefore, any other focus that is not within the parameters associated with classical music is not considered by educators, as it requires that they go against their own conception of "the correct way" to approach music-making.

- 2.** Implementing a new approach to education requires the educator to leave their comfort zone. It requires risk-taking, since it will be necessary to re-evaluate content and how the content applies, while remaining conscious that a mere inclusion of instruments and repertoires of music with Indigenous roots will only promote trivialization. Ideally, changes could involve the establishment of a close collaboration with Indigenous culture bearers in order to contextualize musical knowledge within the represented worldviews.

- 3.** Music educators may fear representing knowledge associated with Indigenous cultures in an inadequate or inappropriate way. Similarly, they may fear improperly utilizing knowledge that has a special protocol for its reproduction.

External causes

External causes are related to aspects immersed within the social context, and thus in the structure of educational systems. The social and educational spheres can inhibit or resist the inclusion of an educational philosophy that goes against what society and educational systems consider valid and important. In these cases, music educators may encounter difficulty in starting initiatives within the educational system.

1. Coloniality is present in daily life in Latin America, given that, as Garzón (2013) writes, it is incorporated into the habitus of society. Therefore, it is “normal” to the colonized that Indigenous perspectives are undervalued or ignored in society. Taking this as a starting point, it is possible to predict that society in general will not be supportive of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the educational system.

2. There is a lack of opportunities to put meaningful projects—ones that acknowledge local cultural knowledge—into practice, in part because of curricular design in use by educational systems that promote an effort to accomplish the goals outlined by international organizations. This situation involves a lack of support from the educational institutional structure at an administrative, operative, and economic level. This is joined by possible resistance from educational authorities, due to the fact that in the collective imagination of many countries, Indigenous cultures are seen as lacking sufficient scientific value to be adopted within schools.

Path towards including Land-centred educational philosophy

Once possible internal and external causes that inhibit the inclusion of an educational philosophy based on Indigenous knowledge have been explored, it is relevant to ask the following: Why is it important to consider Land-centred educational philosophy? Why, as music educators, should we bother to act in a way that may possibly encounter resistance both within and outside educational centres? The answers to these questions may have different emphases, depending on the personal history of the person who answers and the context from which they respond. I believe it is necessary to revitalize the knowledge of local cultures through music education in order to contribute to the respect and appreciation of the cultures and their bearers. Failing in this contributes to the already long list of discriminatory

situations that local cultures and their bearers experience in their daily lives. This goes beyond any abstract concept: it suffices to walk through the streets of big cities or through many rural communities to realize the precarious situation in which many Indigenous people live, situations to which we are indifferent as a society, since we prefer to look the other way. Many Indigenous peoples move to cities because there is no way to support their families, given that the production activities (particularly agriculture) to which they were historically tied are increasingly controlled by multinational companies. These companies, due to excessive exploitation of the land, generate more products at a lower price, making it increasingly impossible for Indigenous initiatives to thrive. At the same time, other people are displaced from their ancestral territories due to the discovery of materials that are valuable to mining companies, particularly for the multinationals that can cause destruction or pollution that would not be permitted in their countries of origin. “*Oh well, we are in Latin America; what is the big deal?*” many may say. Promoting appreciation for local cultures through music education is one possible way to encourage empathy with those who are considered “others,” when in truth, we are the same. Perhaps through music education, we can come to know a way of seeing the world that has been denied to us because it is not convenient to the political and economic interests of a minority who continue to see Latin America merely as a provider of raw resources and an importer of culture.

Styres (2017) states that “the only place from which any of us can write or speak with some degree of certainty is from the position of who we are in relation to what we know” (7). Given this statement, I next look at Mexico as an example of why it is relevant to introduce an educational philosophy based on Indigenous knowledge along with the actions that allow this process of change to begin. I am aware that Mexico itself has diverse realities in its different regions; however, the country has similarities and differences with other countries in Latin America—it is impossible to generalize what is explored here. Nonetheless, I hope that this provides context to the discussion.

Twenty-six million people in Mexico consider themselves to be Indigenous—21.5% of the total population of the country (CONAPO 2015). Having a high percentage of people who identify as Indigenous should be reason enough for the government to consider it fundamental to support knowledge from local cultures; however, “obligatory” contents in education that have an Indigenous theme are scarce (to say the least) in the current national curriculum developed by the Public

Education Secretariat (Secretaría de Educación Pública or SEP) in Mexico (SEP 2016). The SEP attempts to attend to education for Indigenous peoples in schools that are designed for these groups and that have resources for bilingual learning; however, the Indigenous schools do not have enough trained instructors who know Indigenous languages (SEP 2017). This state of affairs shows that Indigenous perspectives are not a priority in the Mexican educational system, given that schools are created especially for the Indigenous population and thus segregating this part of the population.

Along the same lines, the national curriculum includes few sections dedicated to Indigenous themes, and the contents of the few are related to the study of Indigenous cultures as a historical phenomenon (study of the past) or have Indigenous and immigrant topics in the same section (SEP 2016), which demonstrates a lack of recognition for the Indigenous peoples who have lived for time immemorial on the lands that are now Mexico. One of the suggested ways to include music with Indigenous roots in the Mexican educational context is to use the *curricular autonomy* component of the current SEP curriculum (Vázquez 2017). Even though music with Indigenous roots is not specifically considered in this component, curricular autonomy provides a certain flexibility to establish projects that are relevant for schools. In this sense, the role of musical educators is vital in proposing relevant projects for the student bodies in their schools, where music serves a double purpose: developing certain musical abilities and knowledge and appreciation for local cultures. This requires a commitment from the educational centre to approve the use of music with Indigenous roots as a means for learning Indigenous cultures within the curricular autonomy component.

Structural change on a national level is clearly a complex undertaking; therefore, to start, it is necessary for music educators to develop collaborations in local contexts, establishing links between local cultures and culture bearers in order to start a movement that comes from society itself. In my own experience, I have met people who run workshops to maintain Indigenous traditions in different towns and cities in Mexico; however, they have told me that there is resistance from some educational centres against implementing the practices that are shared during these workshops at schools. This is due to the fact that administration and teachers think that this knowledge belongs “*a la calle*,” or in the street, meaning that it is not appropriate for the school setting. These attitudes of resistance impede the establishment of a link between culture bearers and educational institutions.

The first step in making change is for music educators to be open to considering using music with Indigenous roots in their educational practice. This requires instructors to consider other ways of connecting with music that are possibly different from the way in which they have been educated. The next step is to try to encourage other teachers, the administration, and family members inside the school community. With this, music educators could be the key to creating ethical spaces that contribute to the inclusion of local cultures in education practices. Music educators can become allies to local culture bearers by inviting them to their classrooms to share their worldviews through music-making with the student body. This involves establishing a direct relationship with culture bearers in order to plan together the ways in which knowledge will be presented, so that such knowledge is contextualized within the Indigenous culture's worldview.

Final Considerations

Placing the needs of Indigenous peoples at the heart of the discussion is a responsibility that should be shared by different sectors of society, with education systems representing an important part of putting into practice what is laid out in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. It is essential to promote respect and appreciation for ways of knowing that are parallel to the Eurocentric view, not just in words, but also in action, establishing initiatives that support alternative ways of experiencing and living with music. It is important to maintain a critical view that challenges the norms established by the dominant class through the creation of opportunities for dialogue to debate ideas and launch projects that take the perspectives of Indigenous peoples into account. These cannot be defined through an egocentric viewpoint; instead, their approaches should clearly represent the wishes, aspirations, and worldviews that Indigenous cultures themselves hold. Music education can then become an area of opportunity to create ethical spaces that contribute to dialogue between different worldviews. Therefore, it is important to take the first step towards current and future generations of music educators who are involved in strengthening critical spaces wherein music is not a tool for exacerbating disdain and discrimination towards some peoples. On the contrary, spaces for dialogue must be created in which musics are a living and vital part of the diverse cultures and worldviews that exist on the lands around us.

About the Author

Héctor Miguel Vázquez Córdoba is originally from Naolinco, Mexico and is a PhD candidate at the University of Victoria (Canada), under the supervision of Dr. Anita Prest. His dissertation addresses the embedding of music with Indigenous roots into Mexico's national elementary curriculum. Hector holds a Bachelor of Music in Performance (Universidad Veracruzana) and a Master's degree in Education (Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education). He is a violinist with the *Universidad Veracruzana Orquesta Universitaria de Música Popular*. He is the Founder and Executive Director of the Mateo Oliva Oliva Non-profit Association and the Founder and Director of the *Festival Internacional de Música Naolinco*, both of which aim to encourage equal access to music and music education.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the support provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This article is partly based on the project *Building an appreciation for Indigenous cultures in Mexico via music education*, which currently receives funding from SSHRC.

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Notes

¹ In the text, the author emphasizes the use of a capital “L” in the word *Land* to represent the concept of lethi’ nihsténha Ohwentsia’ kékha, which means “our mother Land.” In this way, the author distinguishes between references to the land as a place and references to Land as a philosophical concept. Ohwentsia’ kékha gestures to and takes “seriously all the responsibilities we have in our relationship to her and to each other, and they extend to all our relations (animate/inanimate)” (Styes 2017, 38).

² In the context of the colony, this is understood to be a social organization where the chief (person from Indigenous nobility) exercises political control over a determined area of land. (Chance 98; Menegus 2009).

³ A term that describes a person who has Indigenous roots, but does not identify as such, and who therefore uses Spanish for communication and abandons any symbolism that connects them to their Indigenous heritage (Viqueira 2011).