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Intercultural music education: The Australian Art Orchestra's Creative Intensive approach to creative synthesis

ASME 2018 Intercultural talk- refereed paper

Music education throughout the world is adopting a 'creative turn' in both the ways information and skill are transferred.

This turn is founded on an underlying social and organisational development and growth where music education is arguably resisting universal and homogenous approaches, embracing increasingly differentiated perspectives, practices and local beliefs that assert against globalising trends.

The creative experience of music making can be a dominant driver for social transformation and change, and the practice of improvisation is seen as a significant element of cultural production, collectivisation and sociality. Engaging in the act of improvisation can acknowledge and promote difference, it can foster intercultural and transnational music making, and foster discourses that challenge the totalizing and canonised assumptions of creative expression.

New understandings of improvisation can fracture these simplistic narratives. Improvisational activity in the 21st century is identified as enhancing our relational senses of empathy, curiosity, fostering socio-cultural interactions that can allow learners to perceive, feel, sense, and communicate with each other.

These deeper understandings of improvisational music making are powerful signifiers of the way we collectivise, organise and make musical and collaborative sense of these musical experiences.

Amidst powerful globalized and hegemonic influences and power, we can see that music making and music learning is also shaped by localised perspectives, beliefs, interpretations and ongoing adaptations of tradition.

These are based within specific historical and local, national, international and relational contexts.

They flourish through specific participatory and discursive meaning-making processes and procedures.

A proper understanding of these processes requires interrogation of the ways communities' acknowledgement of improvisational creativity is generated, fostered and shared, and how they collectively comply, manipulate or even subvert codified practices.

This investigation of a localised music education practice explores the interconnections between seemingly disparate cultures, and how they can merge, learn and create from each other.

Focusing on the interchange between and among musicians, teachers, learners from various musical communities and cultures, we can get "an understanding of how music comes to be practiced, thought about, taught and learned across and between different cultures"

3 *Contextualizing the study*

This study reports on the 2016 Creative Music Intensive event, a ten-day practice-based residency of 20 young, emerging student improvisers from throughout Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region, and several culturally diverse internationally regarded master improviser/ educators.

The cultural focus of the 2016 CMI was an integration of two cultural streams: Korean and Indigenous Australian culture featuring p'ansori singer Bae Il Dong, American based Korean improviser Sunny Kim, and the Young Wagilak traditional songmen- Daniel and David Wilfred from Arnhem Land, in northern Australia.

The CMI is an education outreach program from the AAO, now in its 7th year, bringing together young and developing improvisation students from around the world, with the aim of facilitating new ways of creating improvised music, and exploring the meeting points between disciplines, cultures and local perspectives of improvised music making.

The overriding ethos evident in the AAO and CMI is a commitment to creating musical and cultural futures that integrates Asian and Western influences as an essential cultural fabric of our region.

Facilitators

Wagilak people: Daniel and David Wilfred

The Wagilak speaking songmen of South East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, as we all know, are custodians of one of the oldest continuously practiced cultures on Earth. The Wagilak people's song- or manikay- brings to life the cultural expression and celebration of tribal ancestors, country, law and congress.

Through performance, iteration, and interaction, manikay continually evolves and progresses and culturally replenishes itself.

As Gurumal Yunupingu said, the Yolgnu people seek difference as a way of perpetually revitalizing their culture, where difference is seen as complementary.

Bae Il Dong is highly regarded as one of Korea's finest p'ansori singers, a style of epic story singing that dates back to the 14th century. Bae Il Dong, a performer steeped in the culture of p'ansori street opera, is one of the few contemporary singers to follow the traditional method of learning through isolation.

The 20 students were selected via a written response to the perceived benefits they felt their music could gain from such a collaboration, what they could take back to their musical communities, and what they felt they could offer the CMI as an improvising musician. The participating cohort of students invited to the 2016 CMI included cellists, keyboardists, saxophonists, trumpeters, percussionists and vocalists.

4 **Methodology**

Qualitative case studies allow opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in context, and in this case it allowed me to explore individuals, the organization, simple and complex interventions, and the relationships and community building that occurred.

Data were collected using multiple sources, including online information, documents and interviews with participants that was used to construct a diverse narrative approach.

Focus of the interviews was on the exploration of perceptions and scope of engagement in learning.

Questions were open-ended and interviews semi-structured, an inductive analysis approach highlighting the idiosyncratic more than the pervasive.

The event consisted of **daily lectures, small ensemble workshops and open group practical sessions** that explored cultural traditions of Arnhem Land manikay (song) and Korean traditional p'ansori singing. The Intensive consisted of a daily program divided into the transmission of specific information and skills development during morning workshops presented by the leaders, **and** practical application of these skills in the context of music practice in the afternoons/evenings.

The sessions explored meeting points between these two musical traditions, encompassing a range of influences including Arnhem Land manikay, , Korean p'ansori singing, live electronic processing of instruments, jazz instrumental and vocal improvisation, Pan-Korean rhythmic concepts and extended instrumental techniques

FINDINGS

Will start with the overarching thoughts of facilitator Sunny Kim

5 VID

6

One major theme emergent in the data was :

Finding my own voice through personal discovery

-As a module of learning, the participants immersed and experimented with varied modalities of learning, discovering the entanglement of cultures, voices, experiences and different conceptions of aesthetic.

In this sense, new sounds, artefacts and histories provided an assemblage of stimuli and ideas through which they created, circulated and developed new concepts and musical knowledge.

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-Participants shared their thoughts and reflections on how the project promoted engagement in creative music making and what that meant to them.

Some reflections of participants include:

-This intercultural adaptation forced me to question and alter my musical reflexes...

-I'm now thinking in terms of how to be a unique voice with my own ideas

Others said

-I look at my instrument and my approach to music in a totally different way now

-It made me think much more deeply about what I can take from other cultures like Korean music that can nourish my own conceptions in my music?

Artistic director and facilitator Peter Knight shared his views of how different cultures synthesised through collaborative music making, and aspects of knowledge developed.

8Participants said that musical activities were followed by deep reflection- on connections to previous understandings of their world – their own traditions, their rootedness to it, and their capacity to change in this environment.

9vid Daniel Wilfred reflects on his own personal learning over the 2 weeks

10 **A second major theme was that of interpersonal and collaborative discovery**

Participants described leaving behind safe-zones and exposing themselves to the structures and expectations the community has created, resisting against a 'mannerism' and breaking away from previously 'learned' constraints and restrictions of thought.

- Their reflection over the week became deeper and more intricate.

Several participants described what they called the disrupting and dismantling of previous modes of musical production, of situations of action and interplay where they felt they were compelled to oscillate between different perspectives.

They discussed aspects of Intercultural synthesis and exploration , empathic understanding, ideating, prototyping and refining in many ways like a design thinking approach.

They acknowledged each-others risk-taking and affirmed the uniqueness and value of each other.

11 VID.....Bae Ill Dong discusses his feelings to how shared cultures blended

12 VID..... Again he explains how it seemed to come together

13 Implications

Intercultural improvisational practices can challenge orthodoxies of knowledge, artistic production, critical social engagement, and how music education may harness these attributes.

When we engage in the intercultural we enter a site for discussion created by various cultures, a co-operatively created metaculture realised through the efforts of the participants

Where all parties are asked to work towards a new ideal... that is, a cultural environment is crafted through respectful relations that teaches students that music is to be experienced, played and lived through pluralist perspectives.

Our school band programs are not neglectful of this learning. School concert bands might usually play something unashamedly unAmerican- the repertoire is replete with Asian, African and Middle Eastern homages, Our Stage bands and jazz ensembles rarely venture beyond the typical jazz canon- **But as educators what value do we place on this deeper and more profoundly affecting social engagement with music and with each other.**

As a provocation and segue to further discussion, How might we organise our ensembles beyond the Pentonvillian model that largely exists and where the main goal is a Platinum shield after seven months on 3 pieces of music

Investigating the diverse cultures of our students can be a starting point or engaging with guest Artists can start the embedding of an intercultural module in the ensemble curriculum. It can be implemented through broadening classroom activities and introducing students to a variety of musical traditions.

It can encourage teachers to take a more active and personal approach to understanding and teaching music of an unfamiliar culture, creating unity, solidarity and the “need to learn the art of living with difference” and navigate in a world in which cultural diversity exists within the closest neighbourhood.

School music departments can be places where student experiences socially and culturally integrate and unify local visions and aims in music education. At a salient time where many nations are grappling with interculturality and the realigning of past histories, where respecting and celebrating difference requires sustained energy and revitalisation, musical initiatives and movements that bring people together and actualise local intercultural activity are certainly a powerful leap forward.

14 Thank you

15 REFS

16THE BOOK Creativities in Arts Education, Research and Practice: International Perspectives for the Future of Learning and Teaching
Co edited by myself., Pam Burnard and Sue Davis through BrillSense