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Counterpoint or Remix? A Dialogue on Popular Music and Popular Culture in the Music Teacher Education Curriculum
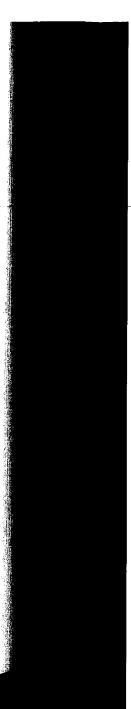
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For decades, music educators have professed the inclusion of popular music in the curriculum; an examination of the music teacher education curriculum, however, reveals scant evidence of popular music as a topic, course, or legitimate field of study. We adopt a dialogic approach to problematize the disparity between generalized support for popular music and its scarcity in music teacher preparation, exploring the tensions, biases, and conflicting values that perpetuate this gap. The dialogue addresses the institutional, programmatic, and ideological impediments to be confronted if we are to prepare teachers for incorporating popular musics in informed and relevant ways, and the challenges of shifting from a discourse of popular music as a product to one that addresses the ways that students engage in popular music. In this manner, we hope to move beyond the rhetoric concerned primarily with the inclusion of popular musics toward a discourse and praxis of popular culture.

Lilla Belle Pitts, noted music educator and former president of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), delivered an address to the Eastern Music Educators Conference in 1939 in which she challenged music teachers to pay close attention to the musical interests and involvements of their students:

> How many of us here and now . . . are able to meet our boys and girls on their own ground, talking sense—from their standpoint—about what they

call modern—not popular—music? Do we know the difference between
hot jazz and sweet jazz, or for that matter, the difference between jazz and
swing? Do we know that swing is not for dancing; moreover, that swing is
not a way of writing music but a manner of playing it? Could we offhand
unravel the mystery of the Dorseys, Jimmy and Tommy, or the Crosbys,
Bing and Bob? Do you know why Artie Shaw cannot dethrone the King of
Swing, Benny Goodman? Is the jitterbug, whether a passing phenomenon
or a permanent affliction, any of our business? (1939, p. 18)

Are you able to replace the particular genres and musicians Pitts named
in this paragraph with references to contemporary genres and musicians?
How might this relatively simple task reflect your knowledge of the multi-
dimensional musical landscapes that your preservice teachers inhabit or of
the musical worlds of the students they will teach? With apologies to Lilla
Belle Pitts, we provide one such attempt, just to illustrate the point.

How many of us here and now are able to meet our students on their own
ground, talking sense—from their standpoint—about what they call con-
temporary—not popular music? Do we know the difference between East
Coast Rap and West Coast Rap, or for that matter, Reggae and Reggaeton?
Do we know that post rock is not for dancing; moreover, that chopped and
screwed is not a way of insulting one's music but a matter of slowing it
down and manipulating it? Could we offhand unravel the mystery of the
Simpsons—Ashley and Jessica, or the Lil's—Jon, Kim, Flip, and Wayne?
Do we know why Kanye West cannot dethrone the King of Rap, 50 Cent?
(Or can he?) Is Hyphy, whether a passing phenomenon or a permanent af-
fliction, any of our business?

For decades, music education has professed the importance of includ-
ing popular music in the curriculum, most notably in the Tanglewood
Declaration 40 years ago. Well-articulated rationales for popular music
in the curriculum, situated in both the scholarly and practical literature,
provide compelling arguments for its relevance to students' lives and its
eclectic representation of diverse musical practices. Music educators have
recently begun to examine the pedagogical aspects of teaching popular
music, including an emphasis on informal learning styles and environ-
ments and how these processes might inform classroom approaches (Fol-
kestad, 2006; Green, 2006).

Sociological perspectives on popular music and music education
(Stalhammar, 2000) pose additional challenges that influence how teach-
ers might adjust their pedagogy and curricula. Adding substance and
breadth to the dialogue are recent publications such as *Bridging the Gap:
Popular Music and Music Education* (Rodriguez, 2004) and a special edi-
tion of the *International Journal of Music Education* in 2006.

Woody (2007) recently challenged music educators to move beyond
the rhetoric of support for popular music, observing that "rehashing the
same old justifications and recommendations is unlikely to effect addi-
tional change now" (p. 32). Is there evidence that music education has
made such a move? Examining the music teacher education curriculum
to determine the extent to which popular music has been integrated into
preservice preparation reveals scant evidence of popular music as a
topic, course, or legitimate field of study. Schools of music sometimes
offer popular music courses for the general student, and academic de-
partments that focus on critical theory, media, or popular culture may
study popular music, but music education majors rarely enroll in these
courses. Why is popular music so conspicuously absent in many music
teacher education programs?

In this chapter, we adopt a dialogic approach to problematize the
disparity between generalized support for popular music in the curricu-
lum and its scarcity in music teacher education. As a doctoral student
who has worked closely with middle school students to understand
how deeply they are engaged in popular music (Tobias) and as a music
teacher educator of several decades who feels admittedly distanced from
popular music (Barrett), we explore the tensions, biases, and conflicting
values that perpetuate this gap. This is necessary in order to confront the
institutional, programmatic, and ideological impediments that stand in
the way of preparing teachers to incorporate popular musics in informed
and relevant ways. In addition, we argue that discourse about popular
music must shift from a primary focus on the inclusion of popular mu-
sics within the curriculum to an examination of the ways that students
engage in popular music.

We articulate five areas of concern that music teacher educators may
express, which are followed by an elaboration of issues and strategies for
ameliorating these concerns or addressing their significance. Three fore-
fronts of action are described at the conclusion of the chapter that prompt

music teacher educators to move beyond the rhetoric concerned with the place of popular music in the curriculum toward a discourse and praxis of popular culture.

A DIALOGUE: FIVE AREAS OF CONCERN

Teachers' Knowledge of the Changing Worlds of Popular Music

Barrett: First, we address the difficulty of describing or delimiting the realms of vernacular musics with which teachers and students are familiar. Lines (2005) notes that "our music-sound worlds appear to be in perpetual conversation with living global and cultural changes that we experience on a daily basis" (p. 3). Music teacher educators wonder how to connect with the expansive and ever-shifting array of performers, genres, and specific examples known to preservice teachers, as well as the musical realms of the middle and high school students they are planning to teach. How do these musical worlds of music teacher educators, preservice teachers, and secondary students intersect? What shared familiar territories serve as starting places? How do we explore unfamiliar musics with confidence? Teachers who incorporate popular musics into the classroom must be knowledgeable and adventurous as they move across multiple musical realms.

Tobias: Unlike the more stable nature of the Western art music canon that music teacher educators are most familiar with, "popular" music is in a constant state of flux. Music teacher educators are best served then by being open to learning from their students. Drawing upon students' expertise and knowledge values their lived experience and provides content from which to approach various aspects of the curriculum. Approaching the integration of popular culture and music as a journey with preservice teachers will also set a model and positive disposition for them to carry out in their own future classrooms. However, this does not preclude music teacher educators from building their own knowledge base of popular culture and music by taking advantage of relevant books, research articles, and Internet resources.

Keeping up with the ever-shifting landscape of popular culture and music may require technological assistance. Experts, critics, and aficionados

maintaining popular culture and music blogs act as curators and/or filters of the latest news and information, providing music teacher educators with an ever-expanding database of curricular content. Spending time online can make all the difference in one's awareness of what is current and relevant. Music teacher educators seeking to expand their knowledge of popular culture and music might branch out by watching the popular television competition *American Idol*, playing with video games such as Guitar Hero or Rock Band that allow players to mimic instruments through the use of controllers, or inviting an expert turntablist to give a workshop on scratching at the next music education department meeting. (Scratching consists of manipulating a record by moving it back and forth while the needle is in contact to produce a particular sound referred to as a "scratch.") Explorations into unfamiliar territories such as these could lead to greater awareness of the scope and variety of popular culture and music while building enjoyment and understanding.

Popular Music and Culture Within the Academy

Barrett: Within the academy, where preservice music teacher education coexists with the study and performance of music focused on the Western classical canon, popular music occupies a limited space at the periphery, if at all. In his ethnography of schools of music, Nettl (1995) describes a few openings for the study of popular music (particularly in appreciation courses for nonmusic majors), while noting that for the most part, popular repertoires and practices are marginalized.

Music teacher educators may face resistance from colleagues toward an emphasis on popular music but may also sense reluctance from preservice teachers to embrace the study of popular musics, as they in turn reflect the inculcated values within the culture of music schools. Other fields, such as sociology, media studies, and cultural studies, have legitimized the study of popular music, but what do music teacher educators need to understand as they advocate for its inclusion within the corridors and curricula of schools of music?

Tobias: The power of the Western canon in shaping ideologies and values of music students cannot be overstated (Citron, 1993; Green, 2005; Westerlund, 2006). Although many university-level music students are

genuinely averse to much popular music, we can hardly be surprised at those who are passionate about popular culture and music but silence themselves within the walls of the academy. It seems in many ways that once students enter the doors of a preservice music education program they are expected to avert their eyes and ears from the present and future in order to learn everything about the past. A preservice teacher in a general music methods class learning about movement and music might not feel comfortable, for example, making a connection to Soulja Boy's "Crank That" (available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vum3qgoh0x4) for fear of raising eyebrows (or red flags) from peers and professors. ("Crank That" is a song and corresponding dance extremely popular among young people, many of whom video-recorded themselves dancing to it and posted the videos on YouTube.)

Music teacher educators' classrooms are potentially fertile sites for reflecting on these ideologies and values in the context of music education, specifically in relation to a shift in pedagogy inclusive and reflective of popular culture and music. By opening spaces for students to discuss, challenge, and reflect on their attitudes and assumptions, we can transition to more acceptance and understanding among preservice teachers. This will also assist these students with developing the skills needed to facilitate similar discussions in their future classrooms.

These discussions might also entail a shift in focus from popular music as content to the ways in which people engage in popular music within the context of popular culture. For example, a discussion centering on a particular track by Kanye West could be shifted to a discussion about the decisions individuals might make in creating a playlist and why they included that particular Kanye West track. Besides moving away from the music being "dissected and dulled by discussion of its features" (Campbell, 1995, p. 19), this is one way to mitigate concern and resistance over the place of popular music in the curriculum. If we are to include popular music in the music classroom, it would be strategic, as Green (2006) insists, to consider the "processes by which this product is transmitted in the world outside the school" (p. 107). It is important for music teacher educators to understand the various ways people engage with popular music in popular culture if this shift is to occur.

Ideally, this work should not occur in isolation from others. Music teacher educators can work in solidarity within our own and related fields

in addition to communities of popular culture. Building on related research agendas and extant bodies of research may give the topics of popular culture and music increased legitimacy in the eyes of colleagues. To build such alliances, teacher educators may need to become more aware of colleagues outside the music department at their university.

Bosacki et al. (2006) make the point that "youth culture challenges researchers to look beyond traditional disciplinary frameworks toward interdisciplinary relationships such as cultural studies, communication studies and critical pedagogy in education" (p. 369). Collegial and cross-disciplinary exchange in the corridors and across campus can be fostered by situating popular music within the milieu of popular culture.

Musical Meanings and Censorship

Barrett: The lyrics and images in popular music present opportunities and challenges for examining musical meanings. Green (2005) distinguishes between inherent and delineated musical meanings; the first referring to the properties, signs, and referents contained in sound, and the second referring to the meanings that situate the music in relation to its social context. (Green, 2008, uses the term "inter-sonic" referring to what she previously termed inherent meanings.) Lyrics constitute part of those delineated meanings.

Music teacher educators may be hesitant to incorporate examples from particular artists or styles when the lyrics raise sensitive and difficult topics such as misogyny, homophobia, materialism, racism, violence, and disparities of class. These topics can be challenging to address in college classrooms; in turn, the implications for broaching these topics in middle or high school classrooms are formidable. The lyrics of popular music draw out a range of personal, social, political, and religious stances that require sensitive and thoughtful planning to guide teachers' decisions about the dialogue and exploration of these perspectives in classroom settings.

Tobias: While we must acknowledge that much of popular music is not appropriate for the classroom, we could also consider that much *is* worth pursuing but may be less known due to complex issues such as access, the role of the music industry, and varying levels of awareness. A recent

congressional hearing on stereotypes and degrading images in media, with a particular focus on hip-hop (Subcommittee on Commerce, 2007) is one example of the ongoing dialogue regarding these issues.

This dialogue, however, is often lacking in nuance and can silence the very marginalized voices that those promoting censorship may be trying to protect. Broadening the discussion to critique the role that the music industry plays in perpetuating certain stereotypes and images and applying a critical media literacy framework (hooks, 1994) is just one way in which to complexify ongoing dialogue in this area. Navigating difficult topics such as misogyny, homophobia, violence, and racism provides opportunities for students to develop a critical frame from which to negotiate popular culture.

Resources such as Byron Hurt's film *Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (Hurt, Gordon, & Winters, 2006) may be helpful to this end. These resources, however, place music teacher educators in the precarious position of deciding what materials can and should be presented to students. When explicit material is presented in the process of critiquing a music video or song, issues of comfort, safety, and appropriateness must be at the fore of an educator's decision-making process and planning.

Finally, music teacher educators should be cognizant, and take advantage, of multiple analytical frameworks when addressing these issues. When addressing delineated meanings of music and images, educators tend to rely exclusively on textual analysis. Sole reliance on this analytical tool misses the ways in which students make meaning of the "text" (Dimitriadis, 2001). Dimitriadis makes the point that "texts—whether symbol systems or lived experiences—are always in performance. They contain no essential or inherent meaning but are always given meaning by people, in particular times and in particular places" (p. 11). By including research tools from fields such as performance and reception studies, music teacher educators can develop a more nuanced perspective that takes into account students' lived experience.

Pedagogical Changes

Barrett: Expanding our musical repertoires also leads us to revising our pedagogies. The recent interest in informal learning practices associated with popular musics warrants a redefinition of student and teacher

roles to foreground peer-based learning, a greater emphasis on aural/oral transmission, the use of technological communities, online multimedia, and modes of remixing music. These roles are under construction and in formation. Williams (2007) calls upon universities in particular to develop "pathfinding programs in the delivery of relevant new pedagogies, as found in digital media, so tomorrow's teachers will be prepared for the societal realities they face" (p. 22). What are the implications of this pedagogical shift for music teacher education?

Tobias: The work of Green (2002, 2005, 2006, 2008), and its application in the Musical Futures Project (http://www.musicalfutures.org.uk) among other initiatives, has catalyzed interest in informal learning practices. Folkestad (2006) distinguishes between formal and informal learning and formal and informal learning situations. He makes the point that

> It is far too simplified, and actually false, to say that formal learning only occurs in institutional settings and that informal learning only occurs outside school. On the contrary, this static view has to be replaced with a dynamic view in which what are described as formal and informal learning styles are aspects of the phenomenon of learning, regardless of where it takes place. (p. 142)

He goes on to say that

> It is also a misconception and a prejudice that the content of formal musical learning is synonymous with Western classical music learned from sheets of music, and that the content of informal musical learning is restricted to popular music transmitted by ear. Since what is learned and how it is learned are interconnected, it is not only the choice of content, such as rock music, that becomes an important part in the shaping of an identity (and therefore an important part of music teaching as well), but also, and to a larger extent, the ways in which the music is approached. In other words, the most important issue might not be the content as such, but the approach to music that the content mediates. (p. 142)

Both Green's and Folkestad's work have direct implications for the pedagogical approaches of music teacher educators. If music education programs expect preservice teachers to enact informal learning situations

in their future classrooms, there should be opportunities to engage in these settings at the university level. Having preservice teachers experience informal learning from an enactive stage (Bruner, 1966) and embodying the principles put forth by Green and Folkestad are essential steps toward realizing this pedagogical shift. This may test the comfort levels of music teacher educators as well as raise questions about where power might be located in the classroom.

Other frameworks, such as the manner in which students use music for self-management and self-regulation (Batt-Rawden & DeNora, 2005) or the ways that music constitutes spaces in students' lives (Stalhammar, 2000) have additional implications for learning and teaching. New pedagogical models may also be developed as a result of a deeper understanding of popular culture and music content. For example, the ways in which musicologist Wayne Marshall (see http://wayneandwax.com/?p=137) explores the melodic contour of the "Zunguzung" theme, used in an early reggae tune, through multiple decades and locations not only provides an insight into how "race, nation, place, and migration" can be investigated through a musical excerpt but also provides our field with new ways of thinking about popular music through a musicological lens. By drawing on this type of expertise and taking advantage of emerging technologies, music teacher educators can open entirely new musical worlds and pedagogical approaches for future music teachers.

Situating the Personal and the Professional

Barrett: Teachers draw from their own musical preferences and experiences in preparing to teach. Engaging in the study of a wide range of musical genres and participating in new musical practices is essential if music education and music teacher educators are to remain relevant. However, for music teacher educators whose professional paths bypassed popular musics altogether, this call for inclusion can sound daunting. From a personal standpoint, I must admit that I feel dissociated from popular music and find much of what I hear unsettling and disturbing. I find it difficult to mask my reservations in order to bridge the gap in my own classroom. Although the argument for inclusion is compelling, I wonder if this task is best left to those with more expertise and experience.

Tobias: While I do enjoy a lot of popular musics, I have to admit that most of it would not be found on the top of the Billboard charts. I find myself continuously reconciling the tension of listening and wishing to provide students opportunities for engaging with popular musics that they might not consider popular while sometimes questioning the place in the classroom of music they love most. But just as the way I listen to Western classical music shifted as I learned about its nuances during years of training, I find the same thing happening to a certain extent in the context of popular culture and music.

What I find compelling is where this might lead. As I gain a deeper understanding of popular musics and how people engage with them, I sense a transformation of my disposition toward and relationship with an ever-expanding set of popular genres and subgenres. While I might not get excited over a T.I. or Rihanna track, I do get excited about hearing the ways I could mash them up or remix them with other pieces. While I may not be excited about watching *American Idol* or singing Karaoke Revolution (a video game in which a player sings karaoke and is assessed by the game system according to her or his accuracy), I am fascinated as a teacher educator to consider the implications when students who engage with these forms of popular culture enter our classrooms with skills, knowledge, and notions about music that we might not yet entirely understand.

I don't think that waiting for the next generation of music teacher educators is viable since the gap left open is already being filled with resources for teachers such as *In Tune Monthly: The Musician's Textbook* (http://www.intunemonthly.com), *Music Alive* (http://www.musicalive.com), and other such resources that are not based on contemporary theoretical frameworks or pedagogical models discussed throughout this chapter.

Music educators might also find themselves dealing with trends of urban school districts hiring popular musicians on an adjunct basis to teach popular music in place of certified music educators, not just for financial reasons but because these popular musicians will address the needs and desires of the largest number of students. The best thing for our field might be to move out of our comfort zones and engage in research that can help build knowledge of these phenomena to develop appropriate pedagogical models in the future.

Although the inclusion of popular culture and music may not be common in the United States, this emphasis has been a component of several music teacher education programs across the world over the past several years. The Rotterdam Academy for Music Education (Evelein, 2006) has shifted its curriculum to include popular music and instituted a philosophy in which "there should be no discrimination between different types of music" (p. 178). Evelein reports that the faculty of the school have also published a book in Dutch titled *Soundcheck*, which resembles a popular music "method book" (p. 181).

The introduction of popular music in Australian music programs has had an influence on "developments in teaching methods, increased applications of multiculturalism, and the need to keep abreast of musical and technological trends" as well as "reshaping thinking about music teaching and learning" (Dunbar-Hall & Wemyss, 2000b). The University of Sydney has also instituted a one-semester course, Popular Music Studies, integrating aural skills, creating, performing, and understanding (Dunbar-Hall & Wemyss, 2000a; Wemyss, 2004).

At the University of Helsinki, the music department has made a conscious effort to "move towards a 'more multimusical music education'" (Westerlund, 2006, p. 123). Westerlund outlines six ways in which the music program has instituted change in this area. These programmatic and curricular initiatives are worth including in their entirety:

- Recruiting university teachers with different kinds of musical expertise, at first even teachers with no formal qualifications;
- Altered criteria in entrance examinations for music teacher education: in addition to Western classical music, candidates may perform folk, jazz, or Afro-American music on any of the required instruments;
- Creating space in the university curriculum for new courses in Afro-American music and rock band instruments;
- Intensive further education for music teachers in the field;
- Increased technological facilities both in teacher education and in schools;
- Constant efforts to change institutional attitudes in university administration and amongst classical music teachers. (p. 123)

To those who doubt that change is possible, Westerlund makes the point that "recent developments have illustrated that it is possible to change uni-

versity culture in a positive way and that future music educators are able to stretch their musical competencies and gain expert-like knowledge in more than one musical genre" (p. 123). Although these international efforts may not necessarily be transported to the United States directly, they can provide compelling evidence that a shift is possible within the context of music teacher education.

MOVING FORWARD: THREE FOREFRONTS OF ACTIVITY

In considering how music teacher education can move beyond the rhetoric of support toward the inclusion of popular music and popular culture in meaningful ways in preservice programs, we suggest three tiers of action. The first is programmatic and curricular. Methods classes, especially middle or high school general music classes, seem best suited for this focus, although other courses and settings should be considered. In curriculum or foundations classes, for example, preservice teachers can engage in reading, discussion, debate, and reflection on the premises and promises of including vernacular musics in music programs. Music technology classes can investigate the ways that secondary students participate online as they form and shape musical communities. Implementing a separate course in popular music, popular culture, and pedagogy may be an option in some settings, as is searching for ways to integrate this study into the framework of the preservice music teacher education curriculum.

The second forefront of activity is ethnographic. Preservice music teachers can be encouraged to consider students' diverse musical worlds as productive avenues for inquiry. The use of ethnographic techniques—interviewing students, conducting observations, and analyzing and reflecting on their musical engagements—will inform preservice teachers' practices as well as their values. Elementary education or typical survey courses for nonmajors could be used as a forum for inquiry and action research to characterize and investigate the breadth of musical engagements and interests held by the general student. Another area of considerable need is the development of case studies of music teacher education programs where popular music is being incorporated into the curriculum. Tangible examples will prompt implementation and refinement of instructional possibilities.

The third forefront is focused on the establishment of partnerships with secondary schools and communities, and across departments and universities. Music teacher educators can identify middle or high schools with popular music courses as sites for field placements, and identify local community centers for preservice teachers' work with a broad cross section of children, adolescents, and adults. Within academic communities, music teacher educators can form alliances across the university with departments that study popular music and popular culture, host video conferences, and participate in associations and activities that further these ideas, such as the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), the pedagogy interest group of the IASPM in particular, and various blogs, many of which can be found on Tobias's blog at http://etobiasblog.musiced.net.

The study of popular culture and popular musics in music teacher education is a promising arena for pedagogical innovation, curricular implementation, and research. Music teacher educators have much to gain through dialogue, experimentation, and reflection on this promising work. The diverse realms of musics and musical engagements must be part of our "business" if we are to meet our preservice teachers on their own ground and enable them to do the same by expanding their capacities to meet the musical needs and interests of their future students.

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