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An International quartet of voices: sharing songs and culture beyond borders

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ABSTRACT

Providing students with opportunities to experience culturally diverse music traditions is an important, yet complex task for music educators. In this study, the author participants (four tertiary music educators from different places in the world) facilitated a series of online workshops based on songs from culturally diverse settings with a group of pre-service teachers at a Spanish university. Through autoethnographical vignettes, they share their individual and collective experiences. This paper foregrounds the importance of disrupting the hegemonic cycle of focusing on Western music in education programmes and the importance of fostering transnational collaborations between music educators in different parts of the world. Findings indicate that music educators who are willing to share their unique musical perspectives and experiences beyond cultural and geographic boundaries can cultivate learning environments that are diverse, inclusive, relevant, timely, meaningful, and fun for all involved.

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Despite changing demographics in society at large and educational institutions specifically, music education curriculum in many locations around the world remains surprisingly stagnant (Campbell, Myers, and Sarath 2016). This is especially magnified in higher education institutions, where music students often spend most of their time learning and performing musical content drawn from the Western classical tradition by way of written staff notation (Carson and Westvall 2016; Wang and Humphreys 2009). In some situations, tertiary music students ‘graduate with little or no hands-on engagement with music beyond European classical repertory’—let alone music from local multicultural communities or global music cultures (Campbell, Myers, and Sarath 2016, 5). They accept teaching positions and enter the systems within which they were trained, perpetuating the cycle (Carson and Westvall 2016).

To disrupt this hegemonic cycle in music education, Campbell, Myers, and Sarath (2016) urge tertiary music educators to provide more opportunities for students ‘to engage with music of diverse cultures’. They argue, ‘In a global society, students must experience music of diverse cultures, generations, and social contexts through study and direct participation’ (iii). In-depth encounters with music from a wide variety of different cultures can prepare pre-service music teachers for the diversity they will encounter in their future classrooms (Joseph and Southcott 2009) and help them develop a global mindset, which Kertz-Welzel (2018, 97) describes as ‘the filter through which we view the world’.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of educators attempting to answer these calls to diversify tertiary music education curricula. Building from previous research projects and collaborations (see Joseph, Nethsinghe, and Cabedo-Mas 2018, 2020, 2021; Mellizo and Cabedo-Mas 2022), we (four author-participants) share our individual and collective involvement in relation to planning and delivering a series of online workshops to a group of pre-service teachers at a Spanish university in 2021. We add to the growing body of knowledge in this area by sharing several pedagogical strategies and considerations for delivering culturally diverse learning experiences and reflect on some of the challenges and rewards that emerge when music educators share practice through transnational collaborations.

Literature review

Beyond issues related to the hegemonic cycle the Western classical perspective holds in music education (Campbell, Myers, and Sarath 2016), learning experiences that highlight the sociocultural and historical meanings of culturally diverse music might have unique potential to help students ‘sort through their own biases toward people and cultures in ways that turn the corner from suspicion or negativity to curiosity and respect’ (Howard 2018, 274). The results from several research studies support this argument and indicate a variety of positive social outcomes can emerge from culturally diverse curricular initiatives in music education, such as higher levels of cultural understanding (Abril 2006; Chen-Hafteck 2007; Edwards 1998), intercultural/multicultural sensitivity (Howard 2018; Mellizo 2019a), and prejudice reduction (Neto, da Conceição Pinto, and Mullet 2016).

Culturally diverse music education: theory vs. practice

Despite these clear benefits, there is still a distinct lack of practice in this area. Cain and Walden (2019) observed it was difficult to find practicing music teachers who included culturally diverse repertoire and pedagogical perspectives in the curriculum to participate in their research study, and Campbell (2018, 40) noted, ‘a monocultural approach remains widely in practice’. Music education scholars have attributed the lack of practice in culturally diverse music education to ‘dwindling time for music within the school-day schedule’ (Campbell 2018, 40), fears about authenticity (Schippers and Campbell 2012), essentialism based on geography or ethnicity (Fung 2002), and the debates surrounding the ethics of cultural appropriation (Young and Brunk 2012). Although many music educators recognise the importance of acknowledging ‘diverse responses to and uses of musics in different places, by different ethnic groups, religions, social classes, genders, “sub-cultures”, “scenes” and other social groups’ (Green 2005, 77), they worry that a lack of training, experience, and planning time will prohibit them from teaching unfamiliar music in culturally informed and sensitive ways (Cain and Walden 2019). Additionally, educators have reported feeling overwhelmed by the vast amount of music that exists in this world (Mellizo 2019b) and hesitate to make assumptions about which types of music will be relevant and meaningful to their students (Hess 2018a; 2021).

When music from outside the Western classical tradition (e.g. folk; popular music; jazz, unfamiliar global cultures) is included in the curriculum, it is often devoid of context and taught through Western-classical pedagogies (Hess 2018a; Schippers and Campbell 2012). This practice contributes to the reproduction of existing social understandings (Green 2005), legitimises some musical knowledge and practices as superior to others (Hess 2018a), and does little to promote cultural understanding (Matsunobu 2019).

Culturally diverse music education: where do we go from here?

Despite the important benefits of cultural diversity in music education, the complexities can be overwhelming to navigate, even for seasoned music educators. Planning and facilitating culturally

diverse learning experiences is time-consuming; it involves much more than choosing diverse musical content, pedagogical choices are equally important. Tertiary music educators face a double-edged challenge – they are expected to include music from many different cultural settings in ethical, sensitive, and culturally responsive ways, and prepare future teachers to do the same.

Several scholars have put forth recommendations to avoid some of the pitfalls associated with multicultural/intercultural approaches in music education. Hess (2013) highlights the importance of contextualisation when studying all music, even music from the Western classical tradition, which is often treated as ahistorical. Several scholars recommend adding context to the learning experience through collaboration with culture bearers (Fung 2002; Campbell 2018). Howard and Kelley (2018, 16) argue, ‘culture bearers add a human dimension to the study of a musical culture that can be powerful for students and their teachers’.

Because music is an inherently social phenomenon, collective music-making experiences can provide an important gateway to higher levels of cultural understanding when it comes to exploring music from unfamiliar cultural settings (Elliott and Silverman 2015; Campbell 2018; Joseph 2022). As Elliott (1990, 150) argues, when students have opportunities to ‘participate in or “live” a music culture’, they gain a great deal of insight into its ‘meaning and use’. Additionally, scholars recommend utilising oral/aural pedagogical approaches, as they are ‘an inherent part of many musical learning practices globally’ and often align with students’ learning preferences (Hess 2018b, 332). Campbell (2018) and Schippers (2010) note cultural values are deeply embedded in musical transmission processes, and therefore recommend adhering to accepted modes of musical transmission in the culture of origin. Most recently, Hess (2021, 15) reminds teachers that ‘leaving room for uncertainty’ is important – as one person’s perspective (even the perspective of a culture bearing musician) cannot be generalised to an entire group. An approach grounded by uncertainty addresses complexities related to transmission choices and the notion of being a culture bearer. This approach also minimises hegemonic pedagogical tendencies because it provides teachers space ‘to acknowledge that different pedagogical strategies will not necessarily work across contexts and populations’ (25). Westerlund and Karlsen (2017) suggest transnational collaborations can also promote more heterogenous and reflexive notions of diversity and provide music educators with opportunities to overcome their professional blind spots.

The above review outlines some complexities of culturally diverse music education and recognises a distinct lack of practice in this area. Although previous authors have provided recommendations for teaching music from diverse settings in sensitive and ethical ways, there remains a paucity of research about the experiences of tertiary music educators teaching culturally diverse music in cross-cultural settings.

Method

The purpose of this phenomenological, autoethnographic study was to explore the experiences of four tertiary music educators who facilitated a series of online workshops with a group of pre-service teachers at a Spanish university.

Participants

The four author-participants are tertiary music educators originating from different parts of the world. The first author (Jennifer), from the United States, teaches K-8th grade music and mentors pre-service teachers at The University of Wyoming Laboratory School, United States. At the time of this study, she worked as a visiting scholar alongside the second author (Alberto), who is Spanish and works in pre-service programmes at University Jaume I of Castellon, Spain. The third author (Dawn) is South African, now teaching in pre-service programmes at Deakin University, Australia, and the fourth author (Rohan) is Sri-Lankan, now teaching in preservice programmes at The University of Canberra, Australia.

Research approach

This study was phenomenological in nature, as we explored our lived experience in relation to understanding a central phenomenon (Creswell et al. 2003). Within this framework, we used elements of autoethnography to make sense of the ways in which our individual experiences ‘ha [d] their basis in, or [were] made possible by, being part of a culture and/or owning a specific cultural identity’ (Pitard 2019, 1829). According to Smith (2017), autoethnography is ‘a highly personalised form of qualitative research in which researchers tell stories that are based on their own lived experiences and interactions with others within social contexts, relating the personal to the cultural in the process and product’ (571).

Research context and limitations

Alberto (the host instructor) provided important background information to Jennifer, Dawn, and Rohan in preparation for their workshops. First, workshops were delivered to students undertaking an elective subject within the Bachelor of Primary Education programme. Second, students had differing levels of musical training and experience. Thirdly, due to a third wave of COVID-19 pandemic in Spain, all classes were delivered online. Therefore, students had little or no access to musical instruments. Finally, English was not students’ first language (though they all had some English language experiences). Alberto forewarned that his students may struggle to fully understand nuances of the lessons due to language barriers, coupled with the challenges of online learning environments (sound quality and/or limitations in body language as a tool to communicate).

Research process and procedures

Prior to teaching our workshops in February 2021, we regularly communicated through email and met via Zoom to establish common expectations for structuring our workshops. We agreed that each guest presenter would choose a song that related to their county of birth. The three online workshops took place at the same time, once a week, correlating with Alberto’s semester teaching schedule. The order of presentations was determined in relation to the convenience of the presenters. Each presenter provided Alberto with resources ahead of time (short articles about the music and culture, and photographs of the place from where the songs emanated) to prepare students for the workshop. The song lyrics, score and video footage of the songs were only shared at the time of the workshop.

After discussing recommendations of previous researchers in this area, we agreed that during each online workshop (approximately 90 minutes), students would have opportunities to listen to different arrangements of the songs (Howard and Kelley 2018), learn about their historical and cultural significance (Campbell 2018; Hess 2013; Howard 2018), explore the underlying music culture through conversations with each presenter as culture bearer (Campbell 2004; 2018; Fung 2002; Howard and Kelley 2018), and learn the songs through a pedagogical approach that is common in the culture of origin (Schippers 2010). Although we acknowledge one 90-minute session, in and of itself, is unlikely to promote deep levels of cultural understanding, we agree with Campbell (2004), who argued even a single classroom visit ‘can be an occasion for making the human connection to the music, and for allowing students to recognize its use and value by people within a particular segment of society’ (219).

During our pre-workshop meetings, we discussed the complexities of collective music making in the online environment (Gibson 2021). For example, issues like poor audio quality and transmission delays (annoying for all teachers) can be debilitating in the music classroom because they make synchronous attempts at group music-making disappointing at best, and impossible at worst (Camlin and Lisboa 2021). During these meetings, we also reviewed each other’s songs, contextual materials, and slideshows, and asked each other questions, such as: Why did you choose

that song and when did you learn it? Why did you choose that pedagogical approach? As collective music making is essential to the learning process (Elliott and Silverman 2015), we agreed once restrictions were lifted, Alberto (with the help of Jennifer) would extend the online learning experiences through an additional face-to-face active music making session to provide students the opportunity to collectively make music and create their own arrangements of the songs they learned.

Data collection and analysis

Between February-May 2021 we met through Zoom and used journals to document our personal perspectives during the planning, implementation, and reflection stages of the project (Ortlipp 2008). Our notes were independently written in English during and at the end of each meeting. In writing autoethnographic accounts, Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010) make the point that ‘questions of reliability refer to the narrator’s credibility’ (10). The way the story is told is what matters to the reader – as a coherent and true account that helps the reader communicate with others who may be different from themselves (Ellis 2004). Zoom recordings assisted us in recalling memories of teaching experiences, and therefore served as an effective way to triangulate the data (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010). We established trustworthiness of our descriptions by engaging considerably and professionally with each other’s reflections (Bochner 2001).

We used interpretative phenomenological analysis to gain a deeper understanding of our personal and shared experiences as the research process unfolded (Smith, 2017). We independently read and re-read own personal narratives, making notes in the margins before applying broad coding categories based on our initial impressions. We then shared written excerpts from our journal entries with each other, conversing about emerging themes and ways to identify common themes. This lively discussion contributed to sorting through our colour coded portions of text as we labelled segments of the data using an inductive coding process of categorization to identify different themes (Linneberg and Korsgaard 2019). Needless to say, we experienced some uncertainty in deciding on the number of themes. Nevertheless, we jointly discussed our individual interpretations and codes, checking for meaning and providing validation checks as we coded our themes (Creswell and Miller 2000).

Findings

Smith (2017) argues one of the strengths of autoethnographic research is that it ‘can be represented in numerous ways’ (572). Autoethnographic findings can take the form of ‘short-stories, poetry, vignettes, and layered accounts’ and can be ‘written, performed, visually communicated, produced digitally, and so on’ (572). Regarding cultural diversity in music teacher education specifically, Howard, Swanson, and Campbell (2014, 30) contend individual vignettes can serve as a powerful way to ‘make sense of societal, musical, and pedagogical matters’.

In this section, we communicate our findings through four short vignettes, which offer a glimpse into our lived experiences at various points of the research process. At our final Zoom meeting (after the face-to-face music-making session), we agreed to use statements drawn directly from our reflective journals to compose individual, summative vignettes that captured the ‘essence’ of our experiences. Using our own words, we share our perceptions of teaching familiar songs (to us) in unfamiliar environments (online with students in another country) and provide insight about the thought processes that informed our pedagogical and content-related choices. We acknowledge our lived experiences may not be representative of other tertiary music educators. Yet, we hope our collective voices will contribute to wider understandings of the challenges and possibilities of collaboratively planning and teaching culturally diverse music at the tertiary level (Trahar 2009). The order of our vignettes corresponds to the order of our presentations. Since

student voices are not included in this paper, it is important to note that any benefits experienced by the students are interpreted through the lens of each author.

Vignette 1: Dawn's voice

Teaching online is not a new experience for me, however, teaching a new group of students is always exciting and challenging. I was uncertain about how Spanish students would react towards me and the song. I was also concerned about internet connectivity.

I began my workshop by sharing about the rich history of my country, including sharing information about my South African heritage, the country's rich choral traditions and styles (Blacking 1982), and my belief that it is important for music teachers to share songs from different cultures. I chose to teach the Zulu lullaby *Thula Thu'* (Cock and Wood 1995, 9), which is widely known amongst South African people. Abigail Kubheka, a doyenne of South Africa born in 1937 said, 'it [this song] was sung by my mother, my grandmother, when they were, you know, trying to send their baby to sleep. It was just one of those songs that was always there' (Ballantine 2017, 64). Likewise, this song was known by my mother, who was born in the late 1930s in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KNZ), speaks Zulu, and grew up living and working with indigenous Zulu people. As a young child I visited KNZ regularly and had many Zulu friends. As an older child, I listened to many recordings of this song, and later learnt more about how to teach it as part of my undergraduate studies at the University of Witwaterstrand in Johannesburg. Whilst I am not a Zulu culture-bearer, I bring an endogenous rather than indigenous perspective to this song (indigenous knowledge retrieved from other sources outside the original). As a South African who lived in the country for more than three decades (Joseph 2010), I selected this song because it gave me a sense of connection to my country and the hardships I went through as a non-white person growing up in South Africa. During my session, I talked about the importance of singing for indigenous black people in South Africa – it forms an important and rich part of their culture and heritage, reinforcing and reaffirming their history (Levine 2005).

I purposefully chose this lullaby as it was repetitive (words and melody) and I thought it would be easy to learn in the online environment. The song has one verse, made up of section A and section B. I taught the song through oral/aural methods, using imitation and rote, call and response, rhythmic speech patterns, and body percussion– techniques that closely resonate with the Orff Schulwerk approach. Although no formal pedagogy can replicate the learning processes that exist within a given society, Amoaku (1982, 118) found that 'of all the contemporary trends in music education, Orff Schulwerk is perhaps the closest to traditional African approach to music'.

During the lesson, I relied mostly on body language (heads nodding, smiling, or showing a thumb up) to gauge whether students understood what was explained (coupled with Alberto translating into Spanish at times). Although teaching online makes it difficult to correct students' pronunciation, pitch, and rhythmic difficulties in real time, overall, I was pleased with the students' level of engagement. Once they returned to face-to-face learning, they created their own arrangement of the Zulu lullaby (which was recorded and sent to me by Alberto). This 'contextualise[d] the music for the students, which 'strengthen[ed] the learning process' (Hess 2013, 84). Their efforts made me very proud; I was emotionally moved to see Spanish students perform a lullaby from South Africa as a communal music activity.

Vignette 2: Rohan's voice

I chose a traditional melody as a Sinhalese speaking person from Sri Lanka. I was excited to share the evolving nature of this simple melody, which mothers often sing as a lullaby to put their babies to sleep. It is a well-known song used throughout the Sri-Lankan diaspora. My mother sang it to me in Sinhalese when I was a child, during various stages of my life. Now, I sing this tune to my daughter as she continues to grow, with varied lyrics. Hence, I selected this lullaby because it can be sung

by any gender and the lyrics can be adjusted to suit the occasion. For example, the tune of the lullaby is also commonly used when singing bedtime stories to toddlers. This repetitive rote learning experience is initially provided by the mother who acts as the teacher in this process where the child is the student. As toddlers grow up and become children, they use the same melody for nursery rhymes during play. When they grow up into adulthood, the cyclical practice continues when they become parents, they sing this melody to their children, as I do now. In this way, the song evolves over time, and is used for different purposes at various stages of life while maintaining the original melody—different lyrics can be chosen to suit the context of the day. This song provides a good example of how traditional melodies are not frozen in time. Whilst the melody is ancient, it is actively used by culture bearers as a thriving tune that has cultural significance.

Although I am highly aware of the interruptions that sometimes occur when teaching online, I felt a bit uncertain about possible intermissions. Luckily, there were no technical mishaps during my session. During the first half of the lesson, I taught the melody using rote learning. Next, students were placed in breakout groups for approximately 40 minutes to compose new lyrics in Spanish (considering the original meaning). At the end of the workshop, one group willingly and commendably sang what they composed for the whole class. A couple of weeks later, the students in the class worked together in the face-to-face environment to rearrange the song. This was fantastic – to hear Spanish students producing a new version of the song in the same way culture bearers (past and present) in Sri Lanka have done. In my view, the success of this culminating activity indicated this was a meaningful experience for all concerned.

Vignette 3: Jennifer's voice

While I was very excited to share a song with Alberto's class, I was uncertain about taking on the role of culture bearer. The United States is a multicultural country that is home to people from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds with many different musical tastes, so I didn't want to present myself as an 'expert' on American music. *This Land is Your Land* is a folk song I learned and performed often as a young student growing up in rural America, in the public school system. The song is catchy and has an easy repetitive melody and is objectively very popular in the United States.

I used the five dimensions of World Music Pedagogy (a pedagogical approach that emphasises repetitive listening experiences), to introduce the song (Campbell 2018). I facilitated several attentive listening experiences, during which students listened to short excerpts from an audio recording of the song and tried to identify different musical features (e.g. What instruments do you hear? Describe the singer's vocal timbre). Students actively engaged with the recordings by tapping the steady beat, creating ostinati through body percussion, and humming along. I used phrase-by-phrase modelling and imitation to reinforce the melody and teach the pronunciation of the lyrics. As some students had access to a ukulele or guitar, I taught them the three chords to accompany the song. Students played and sang together muted while I remained unmuted. The collective music-making experience was a little frustrating (not being able to hear the students), but we did our best!

Instead of dedicating one specific part of the lesson to historical and cultural context, I integrated small bits of interesting contextual information throughout. I included information about the banjo, an instrument that is associated with a unique fingerpicking style that is popular in American folk music. I also talked about the songwriter, Woody Guthrie, and explored the reasons why he originally wrote this song. Although *This Land is Your Land* is usually associated with feelings of patriotism (some call it America's 'other' national anthem), Woody Guthrie originally wrote it as a protest song – specifically, he was protesting the vast income inequalities he witnessed while hitchhiking across the United States during the 1930s (Lynskey 2020). Ironically, the verses that most clearly reflect the Guthrie's original sentiments are usually left out of its printed and performed versions. In fact, I never sang these verses as a child (and didn't even know they existed until I was an adult). I used this as an opportunity to talk to the students about why certain verses are sometimes

left out of folk songs (they make people feel uncomfortable) and how song lyrics can have multiple meanings, depending on your point of view.

Once classes were reactivated on-campus, I was able to assist Alberto in facilitating a face-to-face music making session. It was fun to see the students enjoying *This Land is Your Land* as they created their own arrangement. For me, the most memorable part was getting to perform their arrangement with them – I felt nostalgic, impressed, and proud – all at the same time.

Vignette 4: Alberto's voice

A three-hour face-to-face session was held on the day after the lockdown was lifted and students were allowed to return to the campus. I was uncertain how students would react, but they were thrilled to be together (socially distanced and masked) in the music room. One could feel the excitement in the air. Jennifer and I loosely facilitated this final workshop where students had the chance to compose (rearrange) the original songs. We started by listening to the three songs learnt (we had the scores, and YouTube clips provided by each presenter). As there was a bit of uncertainty regarding how to begin, Jennifer and I suggested dividing the class into four groups: Students who wanted to play percussion (drums, bongos, Orff instruments such as claves, tambourines, etc.), those who wanted to perform the melody (violin, cello, flute, xylophones, etc.), those who wanted to shape the harmony (guitars, piano, etc.), and those who wanted to sing. The students decided to begin with *This Land is Your Land*. They copied the melody by ear, adding a second melodic line, improvising strumming and rhythmic patterns, etc. After about half an hour, each group shared what they created. The melodic group explained that they thought they wanted to start with two guitars, one plucking and the other accompanying, because they felt it sounded 'country style'. As they performed, the rest of the groups joined as a natural progression to the arrangement. Jennifer and I instinctively joined by playing a ukulele. After the song was performed twice, we facilitated a discussion about the form and structure of the piece. Student chose how to arrange, perform, and end the piece which they subsequently recorded.

At that point, we decided it was a good moment to take a break to enable students to go out of the classroom to have a coffee or eat something. Most of the students decided they would rather remain in the classroom. They began to jam other popular songs, playing guitars, percussions and singing. They seemed 'starved' to play together on-campus because of COVID-19 restrictions. Some students said it was the 'coolest' moment in their whole year. This was very heartfelt for me as I could feel their positive energy culminating in musical experiences for them to complete this course.

The session continued, and the students worked on the remaining two songs. Collectively they decided how the arrangements would flow; some students took the lead, proposing ideas, and coordinating the groups. Regarding the Sri-Lankan song, they started with the piano and humming, to emulate a lullaby, which evolved into a pop song with Spanish lyrics. In a similar way, the South African lullaby started with the tune on strings and piano, which culminated into an African-influenced Brazilian percussive style 'batucada'. This style emerged from the free improvisation that took place and was not formally taught as part of the coursework. Rather, students were familiar with hearing the style at outdoor events in Spain. It was entirely their choice to consciously mix musical elements they learnt in the classroom with others influenced by their personal musical experiences. When I asked them why they decided to use batucada, they responded things like 'it also sounds African, with all the drumming' and 'it was fun to play'.

Overall, I thought the students' creative choices were both culturally sensitive and innovative. They used informal learning approaches (Green 2008) as they created new versions of the songs (without scores). In all three arrangements, they chose to begin and end with the more 'traditional' versions of the songs (that they learned in the online sessions). They then added their own musical 'flavour' in the middle section, arranging the piece as ternary form.

Discussion

As we analysed our self-narratives, two main themes emerged (connection and uncertainty) that help to explain our personal and shared experiences within the context of sharing songs from diverse cultural settings with students in a tertiary music classroom. In this section, we reflect on how these themes affected our song selection, pedagogical choices, and interactions with one another.

Connection and uncertainty: song selection

In relation to song choice, each guest presenter felt connected to their 'place' (homeland). Whilst they were not physically in any of the 'places' from which the songs were drawn, the notion of 'place' is more than physical location; it includes personal connections and memories that are tied to a given space at a given time (Wiens 2015). For Jennifer, this experience elicited positive feelings related to nostalgia. Yet, her journal entries also reflected feelings of uneasiness about her role as culture bearer as she was not an 'expert' in American folk music and the song she selected was not meant to represent all American folk music, rather an example of many. With travel bans in place due to COVID-19, Dawn was unable to visit family and friends in South Africa for well over a year. Therefore, teaching a song 'from home' helped her feel connected to her homeland – the experience of teaching the lullaby was therapeutic for her. Since working in teacher education programmes in Australia, she has intentionally included music from Africa (song, drumming) in her courses as a way to foster cultural understanding. Rohan was excited to teach a song in a language he spoke growing up in Sri Lanka (Sinhala). Although he wanted the students to know about the original context of the song, he did not want to represent it as a static object (Bradley 2017), and actively encouraged students to add their own contributions to the learning process. While online teaching is not the focus of this paper, we acknowledge the challenging aspects online musical learning environments present (e.g. technology mishaps, audio delays, inability to hear and correct students, and the absence of teacher presence) (Joseph, Nethsinghe, and Cabedo-Mas 2021).

During our post-workshop Zoom meetings, the song selection conundrum provoked thoughtful discussions about the ways in which music educators' repertoire choices can have wide-reaching implications and unintended consequences. As other scholars have pointed out, risks related to essentialism, tokenism, and stereotyping can arise when music is chosen based solely on where it is from (Fung 2002; Hess 2013, 2018a). To avoid these pitfalls, music educators can ensure their song choices reach beyond geographical locations. In this study, the presenters expressed secondary reasons for their song choices. Dawn expressed her desire to share about the rich history of the Zulu people and wanted students to have an opportunity to think critically about why songs are written. Rohan wanted to highlight how one melody can evolve over time and be used for different purposes at various stages of life. Jennifer wanted to open the door to conversations about how song lyrics can have multiple meanings, depending on your point of view. To avoid essentialism and stereotyping, music educators can also highlight the idea that a song is just a song – it is simply one example of music that is meaningful and useful to people in a given place at a given time and not meant to be representative of an entire music culture or population group.

Connection and uncertainty: pedagogy

Each presenter's pedagogical choice also reflected a deep connection to place. As Campbell (2018, 135) reminds us, 'transmission is a cultural marker'. In the present study, each presenter tried to adhere to the way in which the song would typically be transmitted within the original cultural setting (through aural/oral means) to help students achieve a sense of meaning through the experience (Elliott 1990). Rohan utilised rote learning, a common pedagogical approach in Sri Lanka. Similarly, Dawn used modelling and imitation, moving from simple to complex, from speech patterns to body

percussion, using an aural and oral approach which resonated with the Orff approach (Amoaku 1982). Jennifer drew on World Music Pedagogy when teaching her song, a pedagogical approach that is gaining popularity in the United States (and elsewhere). This approach emphasises repeated listening as a way to preserve processes that are important in a given music culture (Campbell 2018; Howard and Kelley 2018).

Again, we had to reconcile our dual roles as educators and culture bearers as we made these important pedagogical choices, which led to moments of uncertainty. Although we wanted to honour the way that music is typically taught and learned within the culture of origin, we acknowledged that even within a music culture, transmission methods can vary greatly from one situation to the next. Hess (2018b) contends that even within in the realm of aural/oral learning specifically, some processes (e.g. learning by rote) are more Eurocentric than others (e.g. learning through participation and experimentation). We also recognise the need for educators to attend to their students' immediate pedagogical needs (Lind and McKoy 2016). More research is needed on how music educators can successfully merge sensitivity to the original culture of the music and the culture of the students in the classroom (Campbell 2004).

Human connection and uncertainty/humility

Also evident in our reflective journals and subsequent conversations was a strong feeling of human connection, both between the researcher-participants themselves and between the researcher-participants and the students. Dawn was 'pleased with the students' engagement' and 'emotionally moved' as the song was transformed into a communal music making activity. Similarly, Alberto felt 'proud of the new iteration'. Jennifer felt 'nostalgic, impressed, and proud' as she performed alongside the students. Rohan was happy the students felt comfortable enough to perform their newly composed lyrics in front of him and the entire class. The aforementioned challenges of online teaching, together with the idea of teaching in another language created moments of uncertainty before and during the workshops. The authors discussed possible uncertainties ahead of time and relied on Alberto to check for student understanding in real time. This collaboration reinforced our connection to each other.

Throughout the research process, interactions between the researcher-participants were characterised by mutual respect and humility – a virtue indicated by one's objective and accurate sense of self, that is 'other-oriented motivations toward others', and 'openness to new ideas, cultures, and worldviews' (Coppola 2020, 51). Practicing humility always involves living in uncertainty to a certain extent. Although humility is an important consideration in all musical settings (Coppola 2021), we argue it is particularly important when teaching music from culturally diverse settings. Noticing and acknowledging our own 'partial knowledge' (20) while accepting and appreciating the expertise of others helped us reach beyond surface-level interpretations of music to deeper levels of musical and cultural understanding (Hess 2021). Despite many years of teaching experience between us, we were all very grateful for this unique opportunity to connect and learn from each other and confront our own pre-conceived notions of people, places, and music, while working towards a common goal (preparing future teachers).

Conclusion

In this study, we attempted to answer recent calls to diversify music curricula by planning and facilitating a series of online workshops based on songs from culturally diverse settings with a group of pre-service teachers at a Spanish university. Findings indicate the participants understood their experiences as a combination of connection and uncertainty. We all felt connected to 'place', the students, and each other as we selected songs from our homelands and taught them in a new cultural setting (online and with students from a different country). Throughout the research process, writing and sharing reflective journal entries helped us sort through moments of uncertainty as they

arose. Through open conversations with one another, we developed a deeper awareness of how repertoire and pedagogical choices can have wide reaching implications and unintended consequences. We learned how several songs from different locations (South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the United States) are important to people and have cultural significance (sometimes in a given place or at a given time), but their meaning and related transmission methods are subjective, fluid, overlapping, and dependent on context. These interactions also prompted deeper awareness of the complexities involved in being a culture bearer and helped us recognise our collective responsibility to critically examine our pedagogical choices in relation to existing power relations in music education (Hess 2018b).

While the notion of uncertainty could be viewed as a negative attribute, we argue it is necessary to challenge the inherent complexities of culturally diverse music education. As Hess (2021, 20) states, ‘presenting different musics with uncertainty allows for their fluidity and the possibility that, as music educators, we may not know all there is to know about a particular music’. Our perspective, while meaningful and valid, represents just one of many different perspectives/interpretations (Hess 2013). As a field, we still have so much to learn about incorporating culturally diverse music into the curriculum in meaningful, sensitive, and ethical ways. As we continue to press forward on this journey, we would do well to remember Maya Angelou’s famous quote: ‘Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better’.

Finally, we encourage music educators to engage with music from culturally diverse settings, and to view themselves as culture bearing practitioners with unique and meaningful perspectives and experiences to share. When music educators enter into collaborations that extend beyond cultural and geographic boundaries with humility and uncertainty, they can cultivate learning environments that are diverse, inclusive, relevant, timely, meaningful, and fun for all involved. While these types of collaborations certainly involve challenges, the benefits far outweigh the barriers. Promoting cultural diversity by including music, music makers, and educators from different places around the world strengthens our global music education community (Kertz-Welzel 2018) and improves the quality of teaching and learning in tertiary music education programmes.

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