a fine FACTA

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A Letter from the Editor

Kim Friesen Wiens

"Fresh Beginnings" is the theme of this edition of *A Fine Facta*. When selecting the theme last summer, I was imagining that a spring edition of a journal that has been in hiatus for a few years would be the impetus for this theme. Sitting here in my home, where I have spent the last year working and navigating work/school from home for my family, both the words *fresh* and *beginning* mean something completely different.

As you will see in the articles within, our authors have embraced the theme "Fresh Beginnings" in ways that I hope will provide you with energy and excitement for the remainder of this year, but also in looking ahead to a new year and hopefully more possibilities in what we can do in the arts.

This journal begins with a dance warm-up and then proceeds into adventurous lessons in both art and drama. From there, we are called to respond and to think critically as a new curriculum looms large. We highlight events from this past year and ideas for shows in each of the arts disciplines.

And, as we consider what "Fresh Beginnings" means, we need to think about decolonizing our classrooms and starting afresh. We finish off with a special section that draws our attention to the Eurocentricity of our classrooms and how several music teachers are working toward decolonizing their classrooms.

It is hard to think about being fresh right now. We are tired and we have worked so hard to create the best learning for our students. Use this journal as an opportunity to celebrate the resilience of the arts and how, even in the midst of deep-seated tiredness, we rise to the occasion—so let's celebrate "Fresh Beginnings."

Kim Friesen Wiens is a music teacher in Edmonton Public Schools. She is also a sessional instructor at the University of Alberta. Kim is currently working on her PhD at the University of Alberta. She is the editor of A Fine Facta *and the music representative on the Fine Arts Council executive.*

A Letter from the Fine Arts Council President

Stacy Kelba

And suddenly, you know … It's time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings.

—Author Unknown

The theme of this issue of *A Fine Facta* could not be more fitting: "Fresh Beginnings." Recently in a meeting I attended, someone brought up a point that really made me think. Although this past year has brought us plenty of challenge, pain and uncertainty, an additional tragedy would be to walk away from this experience and go back to the way we've always done things.

As educators, we are thrown curve balls all the time; adaptability, flexibility and resilience are all traits we must possess in order to survive. Reflecting on my own experience as a teacher in the fine arts, I would argue that this is almost truer for us: "You taught dance last year, so it's no big deal for you to teach drama this year, right?" "You are teaching drama, so adding a couple of visual art classes to your schedule should be no problem." "You're already teaching a lot of the complementary subjects, so we are going to have you run the foods program." These are real statements that have frequently been posed to me and my fine arts colleagues. I would love to say that we are moving toward a place where the same level of consideration for expertise in mathematics is given to the specific disciplines in the arts, but I am afraid that is not the trend. So, then, what does all of this have to do with fresh beginnings?

As is to be expected, the pandemic had us adapt and change how we do things. Teachers have been able to move from teaching in a classroom, to teaching from home and back again, to teaching blended classes with some students online and others in person. We have been flexible with how we do things. We've spent a lot of time in front of our screens, but we have also looked at new ways of accessing the brilliance and expertise of individuals we would never have had the chance to interact with prior to this. I spoke to one teacher who was able to attend a virtual conference with presenters from China, South America, France and South Africa, all in a few hours on a Saturday afternoon with a small fee and no travel. If we are going to have to adapt, teaching within our specialties and outside our specialties, we can at least do so with a fresh take and some support from the experts. I've seen some incredible opportunities for different forms of professional development this year, from full national conferences offered for free, to prerecorded sessions that can be accessed any time, to five-minute mini sessions via YouTube. There is a ton of content out there and it's more accessible than ever.

Your Fine Arts Council is here to help you find the support you need. We've been working closely with other councils to collaborate, share ideas and take advantage of a fresh way of doing things. We are going to continue to advocate for the arts in education, while offering you tools to support your teaching in any way we can. We've taken this year to regroup, revise and re-Fresh ourselves, and we are looking forward to a "Fresh Beginning" with new opportunities to interact with all of you and engage in some new and exciting initiatives. We look forward to seeing you all in person again soon.

Stacy Kelba is the current president of the Fine Arts Council. She has been with the Fine Arts Council since October 2013, and served as dance representative until October 2020. She has taught dance, drama, visual art and performing arts, and directed several school performances at the junior high level in Calgary. She currently teaches junior high social studies, foods and fashion in Calgary.

Dance Lesson Plan—Dance Warm-Up

Yvette Timtim-Ramirez

Warming up the body prior to any physical movement is important. For dancers, it is a great way to start a dance class—focus the mind and prepare the body. Warming up helps reduce injury for the dancer before moving at high levels of energy and exerting full range of motion on muscle groups and joints. This article is a lesson plan introducing the four main components of a basic dance warm-up, intended for a senior high dance class and based on learner outcomes, but can be modified for younger aged or less experienced dance classes. This lesson plan was created in collaboration with Catherine Bawol.

Lesson Plan—Dance Warm-Up

Grade Level

Dance 15-25-35

Dance Learner Outcomes / Program of Studies

1.4 Recognize and repeat the components of a basic warm-up (Dance 15)
1.5 Demonstrate the components of a basic warm-up (Dance 25)
1.6 Lead warm-ups (Dance 35)

Lesson

1. Explain the importance of warming up the body before dance/physical activity
   - Loosen up the body
   - Warm up the muscles
   - Avoid injury to the body
   - Increase performance
   - Improve movement
2. Identify the four main components of a basic warm-up
   - Cardiovascular section
   - Body isolations
   - Upper body and lower body stretches
   - Strength/balance
3. Lead the class in a warm-up to model the four components
   a) Cardio exercises—Start with small, light movement to slowly increase heart rate
      - Light jogging on the spot/prancing
      - Increase jogging speed
      - High knees
      - Jumping jacks
      - Squats

   b) Body isolations—Isolating and opening up specific muscle groups and joints to full range of motion
      - Neck—side to side, up/down, tilt left/right, head circles (clockwise and counter-clockwise)
      - Shoulders—both up and down(shrug), alternate either shoulder up and down, shoulder roll forward and backward
      - Rib cage—isolate rib cage left and right, forward and back, circles (clockwise and counter-clockwise)
      - Hips—left and right, forward and back, circles (clockwise and counter-clockwise)
      - Ankles and wrists—left and right, roll clockwise and counter-clockwise

   c) Upper body and lower body stretches—dynamic stretches, holding each position for 8 counts to lengthen muscles (avoid bouncing or jerky movements)

      i) Standing stretches—start with both feet hip width apart, toes pointing front (second position)
         - Side stretches—right and left
         - Flat back stretch over right and left legs
         - Centre stretch—hands reach through feet
         - Lunges

      ii) Floor stretches
         - Butterfly stretch—bottoms of feet together
         - Pike—legs straight in front
         - Second position/middle splits—legs opened in middle splits
         - Pigeon pose—one leg bent in front with opposite leg stretched behind
         - Hamstring stretch—lie on back and pull each leg to chest and extend
         - Splits—left and right

   d) Strengthening exercises—variety of exercises for strength training
      - Sit-ups/crunches
      - Planks
      - Push-ups
      - Burpees

Assessment

- Dancers understand the four components of a basic warm-up
- Actively demonstrate each component to the best of their ability
- Dance 35—create their own warm-up routine and lead the class including all four components

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Yvette Timtim-Ramirez is the 2020/21 dance subject area representative on the ATA Fine Arts Council executive. She has over 20 years of teaching experience and presently teaches dance and religion at Louis St Laurent Junior and Senior High School, in Edmonton.

Behind the Mask

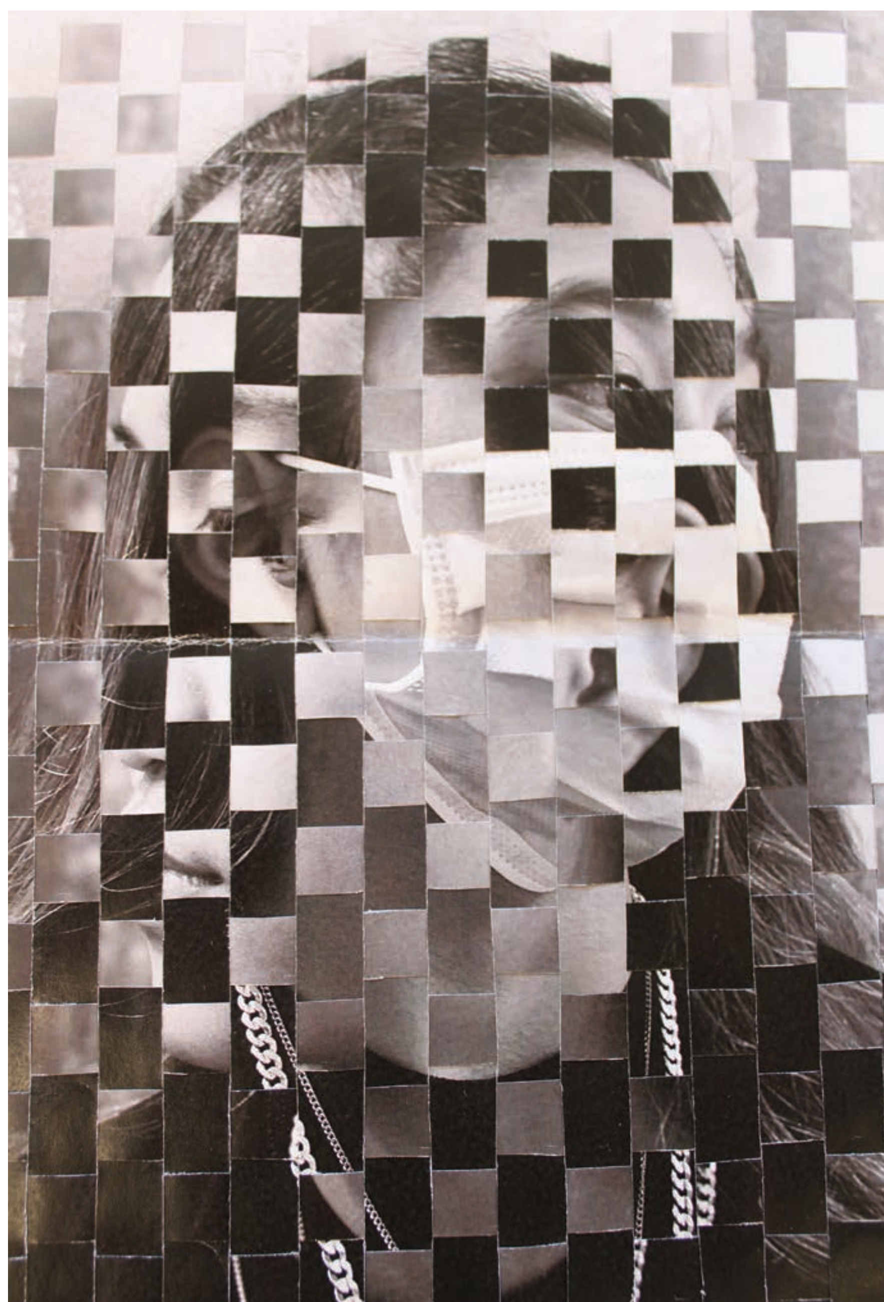
A Photography-Weaving Project by Grade 8 and 9 Students at Marshall Springs School in Calgary.

Samia Drisdelle

Combining skills learned in fashion studies and photography, students practised foundational skills for portraiture and weaving. They then created new imagery by weaving together two portraits of the same subject—one with and one without a mask. Students wrote artist statements reflecting their feelings about the 2020/21 school year, the Covid-19 pandemic and how it has altered their lives.

In designing this lesson plan, I focused on teaching the reasons why photographers use the specific settings that they do, and I exaggerated conditions to make it very apparent. So, after learning the basic functions for their school-owned Canon Rebel T6 digital cameras, my students and I set out for the outdoors to take black-and-white portraits in natural light. The goal was simple: capture portraits that were in focus and exhibited the rule of thirds, with unfocused, blurry backgrounds. We talked about how eyes are the window to the soul and that a good portrait shows the eyes in focus.

Next, we created an indoor photo shoot using large swaths of dark fabric to create makeshift photo booths. As I didn't have



access to spotlights, students used the flashlight on their cell phones to create opportunities to capture drama. Because this project was assigned during the pandemic, masks were mandatory for students who were taking photos, and the models were asked to socially distance themselves from the photographers.

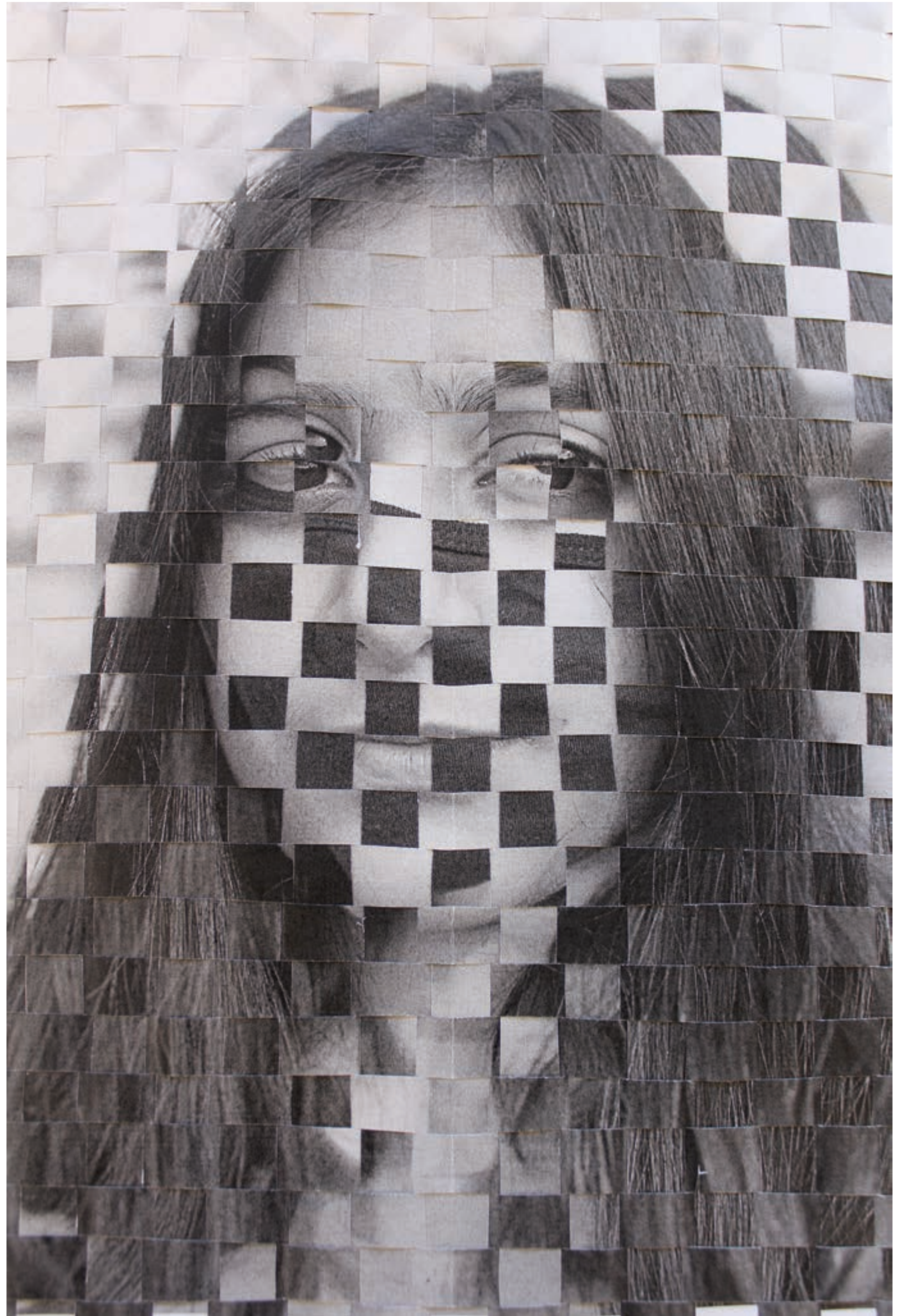
Once students understood the range of possibilities they could create with portraiture, it was time to take their skills and apply them to a project that would represent the current times, so, as an artist and teacher, I designed a project called "Behind the Mask," in which students would be tasked with taking two portraits of one student in class; each one would be similar in composition and lighting. One portrait would have the model masked, the other would not. Once these portraits met the criteria for the assignment, I printed the photos on simple copy paper.

In addition to teaching a photography program at my school, I have also been given the opportunity to develop a fashion program. Because weaving is one of my favourite units to teach, I thought it would be interesting to combine these photographs like fabric. I discovered the art of David Samuel Stern (http://davidsamuelstern.com/) and introduced the students to his work to pique their interest in the modern art of weaving photographs.

In addition to Stern's work, we looked at the history of weaving in Indigenous cultures. Students learned basic weaving techniques and practised with preshredded paper.

Once students felt confident, it was time to weave their two portraits together. They numbered each strip before cutting them, to keep them in order. As students manipulated their paper, the room became quiet and calm. As their hands did the work and their brains took a rest, I was reminded of the importance of using art as therapy. These students had been through a lot these past few months—isolation, online learning, sick relatives, parents facing the stress of unemployment; the meditative act of weaving was a small break from all the stress the pandemic had caused. Once their weaving was complete, they were asked to write an artist's statement. Below is an artist statement written by a student.

My weaved artwork I have accomplished is significant to me because it marks a time in history that we are going through. The steps taken to complete this woven piece are thoughts of my creativity. I decided to take two nicely photographed portraits and weave them into each other as a way to symbolize and show how diverse we can be behind a mask. This reflects the times we've been through as well as how changed our lifestyles are. I like this artwork because it weaves two times of our lives together and creates a unique picture. While doing this piece, I realized that we, necessarily, are not what we look like under our coverings. While I was weaving, I thought to call this artwork, "The Change in Time " because it explains the drastic changes we have to adapt to in the year of 2020. Lastly, if I were to do this art again, maybe I would add colour to the picture. This way, the weaving will be brighter and have a brighter message rather than a monochromatic setting in time.



Samia Drisdelle is a teacher for the Calgary Board of Education. She holds a BFA in art education from Concordia University (Montreal). She is also a published children's book illustrator and has completed numerous private commissions and marketing designs. She has 20 years of fine arts and applied arts teaching experience in the community and in the elementary and middle school years.

A Radio Play in Minecraft, from 1946 to 2020

Duane Piper

Editor's note: this article was first published as "Chinook Drama—A Radio Play in Minecraft, from 1946 to 2020" on the website of Lethbridge School Division, and is reprinted here with permission. Minor amendments have been made in accordance with ATA style.

In the forefront of the drama classes I share with students at Chinook High School is the fundamental idea that limitations are one of the greatest motivators for creativity. Often I will challenge a class to write a play by filtering all their ideas through a single, found object or a single interview question. They will often approach this by first attempting to overcome it. Through exploration and play, they truly find success when they realize that it's not something to be bludgeoned and conquered. They begin to embrace the limitation, and then they can truly unlock their creative potential.

Each semester I assign projects for which *I* place the limitation on them. This school year, I didn't need to bother, because the world had already done it for me. I was, as we all were, apprehensive about how teaching fine arts would work with students at home, connecting through a computer. What we do as drama teachers has evolved over the years. At its core, though, it's the same art form that Thespis and Sophocles were practising 2,500 years ago in ancient Greece. We are attempting to connect with our audiences and elicit an emotional response; we yearn for pathos. How could we continue to teach that in a meaningful, authentic way, if we were all in a Teams/Zoom/Google Class call?

For me, it started with a joke. In late November 2020, my Drama 10 class was meeting in person. We were discussing the possibility (soon to be reality) of moving to an online format. Our class was in the middle of a radio play project. They were rehearsing for a performance of *The Baby Snooks Show*, a popular radio play series from the 1940s starring the Funny Girl herself, Fanny Brice. How could we possibly recreate the energy and chemistry of the show if we were all connecting from different locations? One student threw out an offhand comment, "Why don't we just meet in Minecraft?" We all had a laugh, but I saw how their eyes grew large, and they made excited comments to each other. So, I took it seriously. I asked how many of them had Minecraft at home; every hand but one rose quickly. The one who didn't raise his hand let us know that his brother had an account, and he was sure that he could commandeer it … for school, of course.

Just a week and a half later, it was officially announced that all high schools were to move to online

learning for the last two weeks in December. That was when I decided that I would take the plunge and actually try it. Our Drama 10 class wasn't going to meet on Zoom, Teams, Google, Discord or even MSN Messenger—we were going to meet every day in the blocky, beautiful world of Minecraft.

Like many of you would, I immediately started to plan out a sequence of lessons, using traditional methods. I didn't check, and I don't recall a chapter in Harry Wong's book about teaching in Minecraft, but I persevered. I had a solid idea of how things should proceed. The students would all come together to create a Minecraft version of our theatre. They would make it to scale, with each block in the game representing a metre in real life. From there, they would explore the possibilities afforded to them by the new medium. Could they wear costumes? Could they use props? These were the simple questions that I asked, with my limited knowledge of Minecraft. The questions the students asked me in return were nothing short of astounding. They asked me if I wanted them to create stage lights. Then, they let me know they could actually wire them together using an in-game circuitry system called *redstone*. Once completed, all the stage lights were then connected to a series of switches in the tech booth, and the students were able to control them during the performances. This was when I realized that there were so many possibilities, and I didn't even know the extent of what I didn't know. I could write you five articles filled with all the things I didn't know about Minecraft. Because of that limitation of mine, it was necessary to empower and trust my students to use their drama skills in this new medium without being held back by my own lack of experience and understanding. I let them know that I trusted them to build and create and to let their ideas flow.

After the first virtual class, something wonderful happened. They asked me if I would leave the game world open after school. I agreed, and they gleefully continued to build. Later that night, I sat down at my computer to work on some lesson planning for the next day. I realized that Minecraft was still running, and went to shut it down. That was when I realized there were still students working together in the game! Five students were left, and they had begun to build the rest of our school around the theatre. We have a student

population of 1,200 and a staff of 100, so building all of Chinook High School was no small feat. So, this is how they did it. Every day during class, we would meet in the theatre, do warm-ups, play a drama game and then rehearse. After school and on weekends, they would continue to build the rest of the school. What we ended up with was a full Minecraft model of our school. Over 300 hours of work, tens of thousands of blocks placed, every room in its right place, all lovingly created in Minecraft. It is so detailed and so accurate that we are considering hosting this spring's Grade 8 orientation night in the Minecraft version of Chinook. We can't do it in person, but they can log into Minecraft, take a tour of the school, listen to a talk from an administrator, complete a scavenger hunt and find their classrooms.

This means that when they come to us in Grade 9, they will never have physically been in our building, but they will know where to go because they got to visit Chinook in Minecraft.

As for our radio play performances, they were magical, as every theatre production should be. The original air date of this episode of *The Baby Snooks Show* was November 1, 1946. Ours took place 74 years later, on December 17, 2020, and to my knowledge, it was the world Minecraft premiere! The actors were nervous, but they were ready. Their creativity was wonderful to behold; they brought their characters to life, not only using their voices, but also through the game. They had costume quick changes, props, sets, in-game sound effects and even animals like dogs and horses! Just as in a real performance, things went wrong. One actor had their laptop crash right after they delivered their last line of the scene. The camera was able to move so that the character was not visible, and two minutes later, right before their next line, they were able to get back into the scene without a second to spare.

At the end, instead of applause, they decided that we would set off fireworks. This was another innovation the students devised. In one last display of creativity, a student was able to alter the chemistry of the in-game fireworks so that they would show our school colours. At the end of the play, as they were taking their bows, a button was pressed in the tech booth and they were showered with red, gold and black fireworks. It was a fitting end to a wonderful digital adventure in distance learning.

Except, that wasn't the end. Over the winter break, the students continued to play in Minecraft together. In a time when we were self-isolating and feeling more disconnected than ever, they were able to connect through this game and this world that they had built together. Because of this terrible limitation that has been placed on all of us, my students were able to come together and respond by creating art. Even though they were using a new technology, our students continue to connect and respond to their world through art, just as people did 74 or even 2,500 years ago.

If you would like to watch our production, you can view it on the Chinook Drama Facebook page, or on our Chinook High School YouTube channel. We hope you enjoy the show!

Duane Piper is a theatre educator, performer, director and writer. His traditional Cree name is Nakamos, which means "little singer"; that's because he's always had a lot to say! For that reason, teaching high school drama is a dream, and he is lucky enough to have his dream job at Chinook High School, in Lethbridge. He also gets to teach drama education every summer at the University of Lethbridge.

Investigating the Emergent Alberta K–6 Music Curriculum: An Opportunity for Advocacy

Stephanie R Schuurman-Olson

Note: At the time this article was written, the Alberta K–6 music curriculum draft contained a list of 80 songs, the main concern of this article. Since then, the curriculum draft has been revised and no song list is included. This article offers further considerations for music educators when selecting repertoire for their music programs and seeks to open up the conversation about re-examining curriculum and pedagogies to best reflect the needs and experiences of our own students.

–Stephanie R Schuurman-Olson

Teachers, and specifically music teachers, are uniquely positioned not only to teach curriculum, but also to be "cultural workers … capable of identifying and readdressing the injustices, inequalities, and myths of an often oppressive world" (Freire 1998; Gruenewald 2003, 4). We know that we don't simply teach music, but that music learning exists embedded within social, political, historical and cultural contexts (Hess 2019, 4). This places the music teacher as a potential facilitator for social progress within the classroom and, by extension, the greater community. The positioning of the music teacher as a knowledge facilitator and administrator of curriculum grants the educator an incredible amount of influence on the children they teach (Kelly-McHale 2013, 210). As an elementary music teacher, I recognize that the norms I establish in my classroom directly prepare my students for the ways that they interact with their world, now and in the future. When handed curriculum that works directly in conflict with these goals, how do we proceed? Taking these teacher-roles into consideration, in this paper I aim to report and reflect on the curriculum draft documents currently made public by the UCP government, outline problems that lie within the proposed song lists in the documents and offer considerations for educators when considering their own repertoire selection in their classrooms. If "the aim of curriculum is survival," not preservation, then we need to look to "human beings learning and living in … respectful relationship," since survival doesn't come from learning theories and memorizing core knowledge (Chambers 2012, 199). We need to shift our thinking from cultural preservation (Lupul 1977, 168) to cultural development. Our curriculum needs to reflect this forward movement. We have been granted a unique opportunity to practise being "transformative intellectuals" in an education system that is always political (Giroux 1988).

Leaked Curriculum Drafts

On October 21, 2020, an Alberta kindergarten–Grade 4 music curriculum document was leaked to the

public by way of an article written by Janet French and published by the CBC (J French 2020a). For a province that was once known for "lead[ing] the way in implementing the many facets of a comprehensive multicultural policy" (Lupul 1977, 165), this document caused music educators, curriculum specialists and parents from across Alberta (and beyond) much alarm. The document, written with the advice of William French (a lawyer, translator, and chair of the board for the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Calgary), presents outdated knowledge that is out of touch with both practitioner and academic discourse in music education. It prioritizes a core set of values not reflective of the social, cultural, religious, racial and otherwise experiential pluralism that exists within Alberta classrooms, families or communities. In fact, the document is simply copied and pasted from a freely available curriculum document published by the Core Knowledge Foundation (CKF), an educational nonprofit organization based in Charlottesville, Virginia (Core Knowledge 2016). The organization was founded by E D Hirsch, who values knowledge-based learning over critical thinking skills (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._D._HirschE. D. Hirsch).

Central to the draft curriculum document is the CKF's prescribed song list for kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 music classrooms. In the history of Alberta music curricula, a prescribed list has never before been government mandated (or even suggested) (Green, Vogan and Bray 2006). The list in the draft document, a total of 80 songs, is a compilation of children's nursery songs, "folk" songs, and nationalistic (American) anthems. It is overtly clear not only that this song list is outdated, but that the songs are specifically rooted in a geographical place and history that has very little, if anything, to do with Albertans. Furthermore, this song list has titles that have origins, content and practices linked directly to blackface minstrelsy, the inclusion of which in K–6 music curricula has been at the forefront of music education discourse in the last few years, elevated recently by the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the surge in attention to the Black Lives Matter movement that has followed.

It was the inclusion of these songs that made me want to investigate the following issues specifically related to the list: What are the histories of the songs on this list, and do they have a place in the K–2 classrooms of Alberta? Who are the people and voices that these songs represent? Who is excluded from and silenced by this list? And, if the CKF's intention in the creation of this song list indicates that these songs are part of a "core knowledge" that young students should know, presumably this list also represents songs that are important for children to know in order to engage with their culture and establish a collective identity. Therefore, what culture and collective identity is represented by this list and how does it serve us within our Albertan K–6 music classroom context? If "nationalism and national identity [are] ultimately about who belongs and who does not" (Stark and Arcand 2019, 19), then, by this list, who belongs within our Alberta K–6 music curriculum and, by extension, our classrooms?

Current Discourse and Research Findings

Over the span of the past few years, the discourse in music education has shifted in practitioner circles to explore possibilities for what a social justice perspective in the music classroom could look like. Part of this ongoing conversation surrounds the investigation into the history of songs connected to blackface minstrelsy performances of the early to mid-19th century in the United States. "Questionable song" lists have been generated as collaborations between educators and researchers with extensive citations for educators to consult and make decisions regarding their own classroom repertoire (McDougle 2019). Nonprofit organizations that aim to educate and serve as a platform for social justice discourse have emerged. Publishers of music education resources have begun to vet their literature and release new editions of publications that eliminate songs with problematic histories (Feierabend Association for Music Education 2019; Brumfield 2020 [personal communication, October 28]). Educators, ethnomusicologists, curriculum designers and publishing companies have been actively engaged in this work for years. It is because of my involvement in these ongoing conversations that I had some previous awareness of the dark histories behind a number of the titles on the CKF kindergarten–Grade 2 song list, and their inclusion caused me alarm. My curiosity led me to research the 80 songs on the list.

My first action was driven by anger and urgency: I copied the song list, wrote a short preamble outlining the problematic nature of the list and posted it on social media (Schuurman-Olson 2020). The public post was picked up quickly by politically left-leaning groups populated by Alberta teachers and parents. It was clear that many Albertans took the same issues with the song list that I did. Their concerns echoed Rawlings's (1979) findings that "unsuitable" songs for Canadian children would include "those condoning violence, destructive sex, and profane language" (p 21), in addition to racist, misogynistic and otherwise problematic songs (of which the CKF list had many). I tracked as many of the resulting online conversations as best as I could, giving clarification and editing the original post to anticipate the questions that started to emerge. Discussion centred on three talking points. First, readers were curious to know which of these songs were problematic. Second, most identified how "American" the song list was and demanded it include more "Canadian" content, and "songs that would reflect the Canadian heritage"; finally, many questioned if teachers needed a song list at all (Schuurman-Olson 2020). These questions guided me on a deep investigation into the song literature. Always a teacher, it was my goal to make public my findings of the problems within the song list and illuminate the incompetence of the government-appointed curriculum "experts," in order to demand better for our children. I became concerned with analyzing the data I collected so that I could demonstrate what a narrow version of "music" this proposed curriculum included. My findings, based on all 80 songs, revealed that

- 86 per cent of the songs have Anglo-British or Anglo-American origins;
- all but 2 of the 80 songs are in English:
  - non-English songs are "La Cucaracha "(Spanish) and "Frere Jacques" (French);
- 18 per cent of the songs are either rooted in blackface minstrelsy or have controversial, racially charged content;
- the oldest song on the list can be traced back to 1709, the most recent to 1959; and
- there is no mention of Canada or its many peoples anywhere within the song list or the research the song list generated.

My research confirmed my suspicions: this list was white, old and racist.

Media Attention and Government Rebuttal

Janet French, the CBC reporter who originally published the leaked curriculum documents, learned about my research through my affiliation with the University of Alberta as a doctoral student there. She interviewed me on November 15, 2020, and the news story was published on December 14, 2020 (J French 2020c).

My conversations with Janet French continued in the time between the initial interview and the article's publication date. In response to the public outcry over the social studies curriculum draft, which was leaked at the same time as the arts curriculum, the United Conservative government hastily revised its curriculum writing process. Self- and district-appointed teachers were quickly corralled to form a new curriculum advisory panel and review an edited version of the leaked curriculum documents (J French 2020b). When Janet French presented my song research document to Alberta Education for comment, the department responded with an edited document that contained fewer songs; several of the minstrel and overtly American tunes had been erased, but 69 of the original 80 remained. My analysis of this new version of the document made it clear to me that there still had been no critical thought put into the list. It still showed a very narrow understanding of what "music" can and should be; many of the songs that contained problematic content or context were still included. Nicole Sparrow, press secretary to Minister of Education Adriana LaGrange, said that the 69 songs that remain are "generally songs well-known to generations of Albertans" and that "there are academic 'experts' that seemingly exist to be perpetually offended"; she assured French that "[the UCP] government does not share that preoccupation" (J French2020c).

The emerging story soon caught the attention of CTV's *Your Morning* national television show; CTV requested an interview with me. In preparation for the broadcast, a CTV researcher contacted LaGrange's office for comment on the published song list, just as the CBC had done. Press secretary Nicole Sparrow responded mere hours before the live TV interview I gave, stating that "the document in question was a very early draft from June. A revised

draft … the version provided to the teacher working groups rightly removed these songs" (Neustaeter 2021). Attached was the same revised document (on which 69 of the original 80 remained) that had been sent to Janet French before her December 14 article was published. We (the CBC and CTV researchers and I) were already referencing this "new" document, not the June document that Sparrow referred to. The interview went ahead on CTV as planned, on January 7, 2021.

The documents shown to me and the media seem to be an abbreviated version of the protected documents that were reviewed by the hastily gathered Alberta teachers who worked under a high-pressure and unrealistic timeline in early December. Although the results of their process were to be made available to the public in early 2021, they have not been released at the time of the writing of this article.

The Way Forward

It is my hope that thinking about the content of the proposed song list causes teachers pause as they reflect on their own teaching practices. When considering repertoire for the K–6 music classroom, some guiding questions to ask ourselves are these:

- Who are my students? Who am I (and how do I position myself within my classroom)? How do I know this?
- Can my students see themselves reflected in the repertoire, composers and performers that I choose to include in my program?
- Whose music is this? Whose voice is it in?
- Am I accurately and respectfully representing the culture that this music is a part of?
- Do I have permission to engage with this song in this way in this setting?
- Which cultures/composers/voices are represented on my song lists? Who is silenced by exclusion?
- What does it mean for me, within my positionality, to be engaging in this music/time/place with these students in this way?
- Does this song choice/language I am using/ classroom culture perpetuate harmful (that is, racist, sexist and so on) ideas that favour one social identity group over another?

Conclusions

If we are to succeed as teachers and work to educate all children, "we must work to remove [our] blinders built of stereotypes, monocultural instructional methodologies, ignorance … biased research, and racism. We must work to destroy [our] blinders so that it is possible to really see, to really know the students we must teach" (Delpit 1992, 248). We must consider the individual children in front of us and ask if they can see themselves represented and reflected in our teaching practices: not only in the repertoire we choose, but in the guest speakers/musicians we have, the videos we show and the musical practices that we prioritize. I would also challenge educators to consider specific school locale as an additional participant body in the learning. Is our place represented in our learning? Are we connected to the very specific land on which we teach? This learning needs to be grounded in relationship and understanding, not assumption and preconception.

Because each individual classroom is unique in composition and exists within its own unique landplace, a prescribed song list for an entire province, let alone one that represents only an Anglo-American, largely 1800s understanding of "music," makes little to no sense. The CKP kindergarten–Grade 2 song list, and the versions that have so far come since, go beyond "American" and erase teacher autonomy. These lists devalue the individuality of the students in our classrooms. They neglect to identify the uniqueness of our vast diversity of place, relationships and people that are present within our varied teaching contexts in Alberta.

When the new curriculum documents are released to the public, I would encourage teachers to look at them with a discerning eye and to consider the practical realities of administering this curriculum in their own classrooms. This is a living and evolving issue, and it is one that needs our acute attention so that we can best advocate for our students and for music education in this province.

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Ivan Coyote Storytelling Event—December 5, 2020

Review by Kim Friesen Wiens

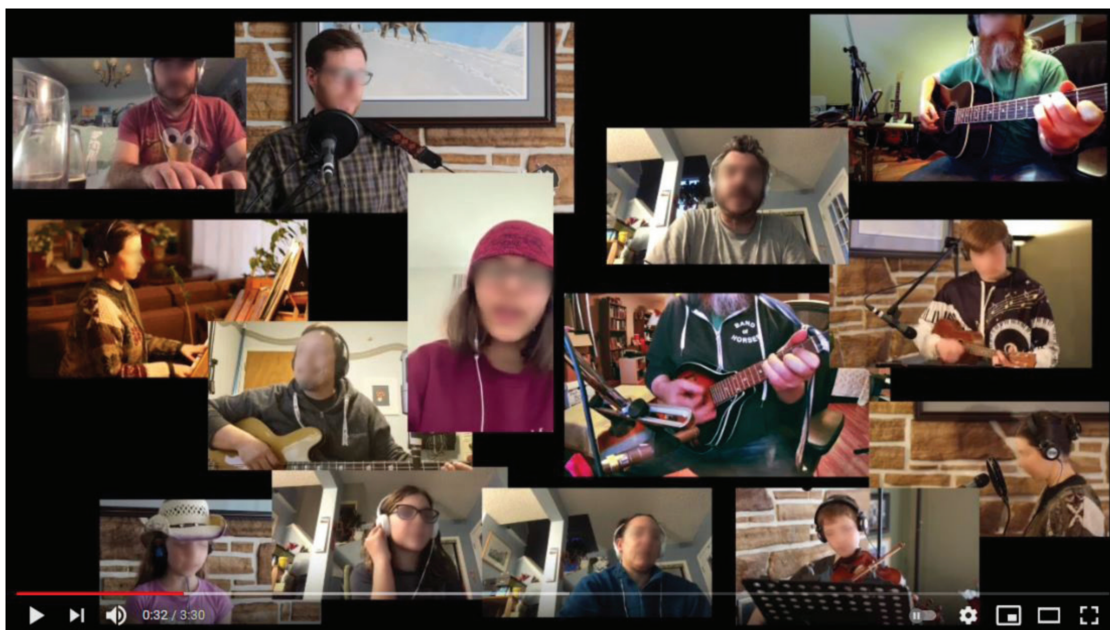
On December 5, 2020, more than 50 teachers gathered on Zoom for a Fine Arts Council event with a presentation by Ivan Coyote. Coyote began by inviting us into their space. For an hour, stories filled that space. The power of storytelling so clear, as we all sat engrossed and immersed in the stories. Stories about masks worn, the hard road and several calls to action.

Coyote made it clear that they are calling us, as public educators, to action. The power of listening is important, but as teachers, we need to actively work at creating safe spaces for our students—safe spaces for students to express who they are—through a commitment to honour the preferred pronouns and names of our students, through a commitment to ensure that everyone has a safe place to use the washroom. This is our job. When we do not do our job, we are creating spaces of shame where our students are less seen, less heard and less welcomed.

As public educators, we must honour the stories of our students and create spaces where all students are seen, heard and welcomed. No caveats. That is our job! Thank you to Ivan Coyote for this powerful call to action. May it be so.

Getting Started with Virtual Ensembles

Andreas Berko



Although it might seem like everybody has already tried their hand at creating virtual ensembles, maybe you've been holding out because you're not quite sure where to start. Music teachers can create virtual ensembles for their choir, orchestras and bands, but drama and dance teachers can also bring their students together in virtual ensembles.

What Is a Virtual Ensemble?

The creation of the virtual ensemble phenomenon is generally credited to Eric Whitacre, an American choral composer, who, after hearing a fan video on YouTube, wondered if there might be an appetite for bringing singers together virtually. He posted some online resources and invited singers to join from around the world. The various recorded submissions were aligned using editing software and made to sound as if they had all occurred at the same time. The first project has grown to six projects involving thousands of singers from countries around the world.

Since the virtual ensemble has recently become a hot topic due to remote instruction having been forced upon us by COVID-19 lockdowns, it might be surprising to readers to know that Whitacre created his first virtual choir around 10 years ago! When music classes started remote learning in the spring of 2020, many hoped that they could simply use online meeting software like Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams to conduct rehearsals and give performances. Unfortunately, slight lags due to Internet bandwidth speeds make this impossible. Teachers soon looked to virtual ensembles to share their students' work and to give them something to work together on.

In a typical virtual ensemble, each participant records a video while listening to a reference track (to

keep the timing together). The tracks are submitted to a video editor, who lines up the audio and video.

If you have ever spent an hour on YouTube, you have probably seen a variety of choral, instrumental, dramatic or dance ensembles enabled by video editing software. If not, why not visit Eric Whitacre's channel for an example of what it can sound like? Click on the QR code using your phone's camera to have a listen.

What You Absolutely Need for the Project

Just like anything else, you can get super fancy and expensive with the technology, but many teachers have made effective virtual ensembles with simple and often free tools.

1. Cloud storage drive: you will need access to some kind of cloud drive (like Google Drive, OneDrive or Dropbox) for your students to submit their recordings.
2. Simple digital audio recording device: to create a reference track (to help participants keep the same time), such as your phone.
3. Video editing software with multitrack capability: to line up the tracks for the final product, such as Adobe Premiere Elements (paid) or Shotcut (free).
4. Platform for sharing: to distribute the video; many teachers will post to Google Classroom, the school website or YouTube.

If you want to get fancier, you can edit the audio tracks separately with a proper digital audio workstation (DAW) or PC audio recording software. There are plenty of expensive software options, but Audacity is free and quite effective.

What Your Students Need

Students can get great results from their everyday mobile devices.

1. Phone or MP3 player with headphones: to play the reference track silently while filming
2. Phone (a second one) or digital video camera: to record the video of themselves singing or playing
3. Access to your cloud drive: to submit the recording, when completed

You will also want to give some direction as to what students should wear, what kind of backgrounds they should have behind them or how to frame themselves in the video (landscape/portrait, for instance).

An Abbreviated Step-by-Step

Hopefully, this checklist can help you wrap your head around the required steps. As with most ventures, the initial planning is key to a successful virtual ensemble. Also, keep in mind that some of these steps will be more time consuming than others. As a general rule, the director or video editor should expect to spend about an hour preparing and editing for *each participant* in the song.

1. Select the song that you will be recording.
2. Distribute the sheet music to the participants.
3. Rehearse or allow time for the participants to rehearse.
4. Create an audio reference track for participants to sing or play along to (adding a click track is often helpful, but not absolutely necessary). If you are recording vocalists, you should have a vocalist sing the reference track to help line up final consonants.
5. Create the cloud storage drive folders: one containing instructions and reference tracks for students to download, and one for students to upload their completed videos to.
6. Create an instruction document for the participants to know what is required of them.
7. Allow time for students to record their videos.
8. Download the videos and edit them in your video software.
    a) Each video is considered a different track in the software file.
    b) Line up the audio signals so that the participants' tracks are performing at exactly the same time (there will always be slight variations and errors throughout).
    c) Adjust each video thumbnail so it is positioned where you want it on the screen (in Adobe Premiere Elements, for instance, the videos have handles that you can use to adjust the size).
9. Export the video from your video editing software into a format that can be uploaded (MP4).
10. Upload the software to your desired platform, such as the school website or YouTube.

Other Things to Consider

Before you select your song, it is important to consider the copyright implications of recording and distributing your finished product. Ideally, selecting material in the public domain will circumvent any copyright restrictions, but if you have your heart set on a certain song, make sure you approach the publisher to find out if any licensing is required. In many cases, publishers are relaxing the rules for students affected by COVID-19 lockdowns, but do not assume that this is the case for your repertoire.

Generally, teachers are permitted to record their students' performances of copyright-protected material for evaluation and review in class, but this does not always extend to public performance, especially when prerecorded and streamed by an outside viewer. If you decide to take your chances, at best, nobody will notice, but at worst, your audio track could be pulled from YouTube (leaving a silent video track) or your school could be subject to a copyright audit.

Teachers also should not assume that copyright laws in the United States apply in Canada. Visit the Fair Dealing Decision Tool website (www.fairdealingdecisiontool.ca/DecisionTool/) from the Council of Ministers of Education for more information about copyright in the classroom and for online learning.

Tips for Other Fine Arts Ensembles

Drama

In many cases, Zoom or other meeting software apps are fine for recording dramatic performances, as the brief lag is not enough to affect the dialogue timing. A few tweaks in the settings will allow students' thumbnail photos to disappear when they turn their cameras off so that only the actors "on stage" will appear. Using the steps above and video editing software will give you greater control, however, and you may still find odd lags for students using wireless internet (Wi-Fi) on slow connections.

Dance

For dance, the lag in a Zoom meeting is often distracting enough that you will want to prerecord the performances individually. Students should still have reference tracks to listen to while dancing, but you will find it easier to line up the tracks if they use a Bluetooth speaker or stereo system rather than headphones (you'll take their audio track out later and replace it with a better-quality track in the video editing software).

Dance teachers might also want to consider looking into the exquisite corps/corpse movement. The exquisite corpse is a parlour game that authors and artists used to play in which each added a segment to a story or drawing while seeing only what the last person had submitted. The resulting story or picture was often humorous and entertaining. Choreographers adopted this movement during COVID-19 lockdowns to bring their isolated dance corps together, with each participant taking a short segment of a song, starting with the last pose of the previous dancer. Some examples include those from Mitchell Rose Films, which you can find on YouTube (or by scanning the QR code).

Some Examples of My Virtual Ensembles

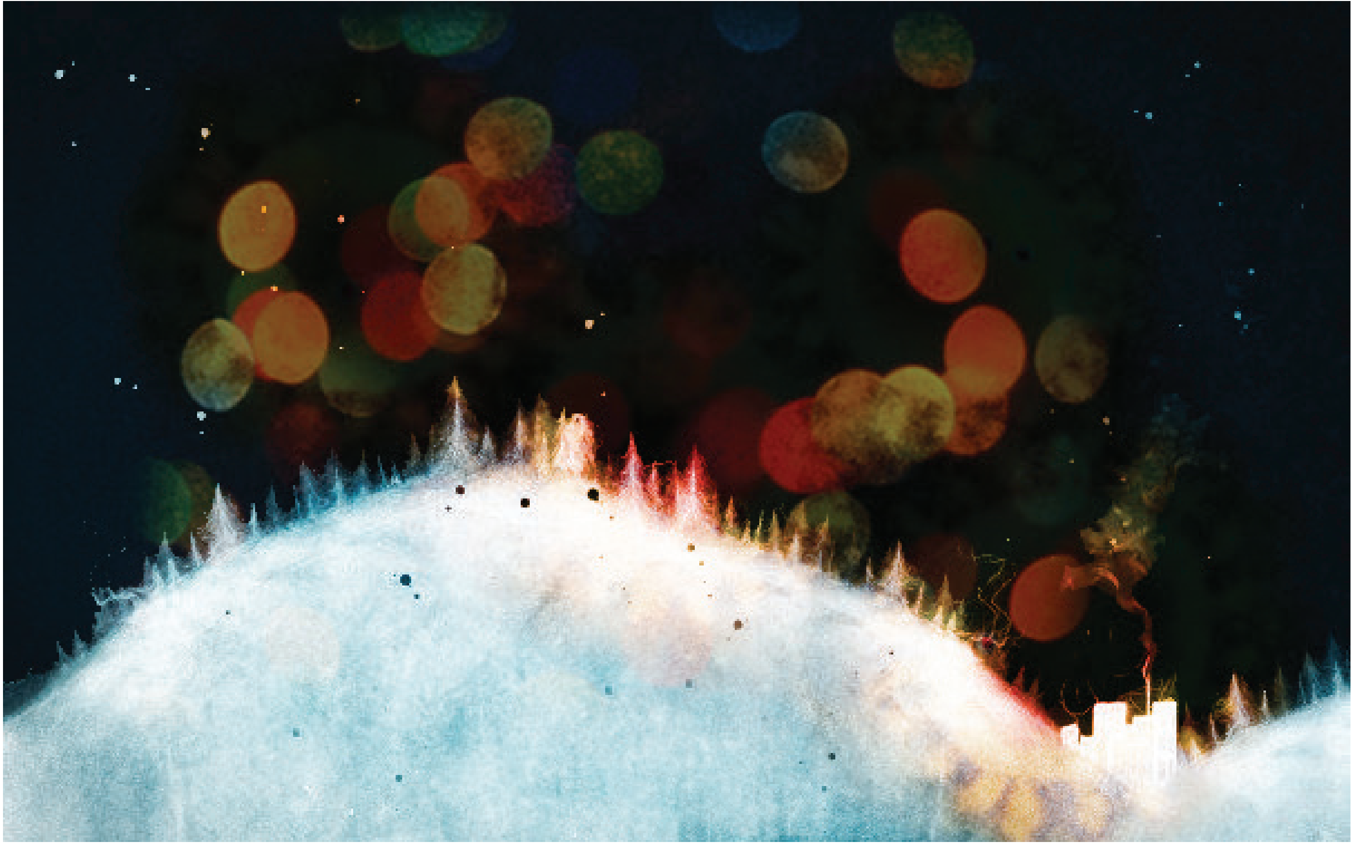
If you're looking for some amateur examples of virtual ensembles, have a listen to these recordings that I prepared for the Calgary Boys' Choir and for a group of friends. The Boys' Choir video is an arrangement by their director that served as a final product for the year, and my friends and I were just having some fun while sheltering in place.

Hope you enjoy and have fun creating your own virtual ensembles!

Andreas Berko, BMus, MEd, is the fine and performing arts consultant for Calgary Catholic School District.

From the Visual Arts

Dairn Alexandre



Holiday Rainbow Lights

Get Away from Me, COVID Cowboys! Unlike You, I Don't Have a Death Wish.

Magpie

Dairn Alexandre is a teacher, illustrator and writer. His work is on exhibition in Montreal; he has been a presenter and guest lecturer at McGill University and at the University of Calgary, and has hosted sessions for Alberta's Fine Arts Council. Dairn lives with his wife and two children.

Special Section: Decolonizing the Music Room

In this section, we are pleased to feature a series of articles that address the ways in which music teachers in Alberta are currently addressing the Eurocentricity of the music room.

Breaking the Bonds of Eurocentricity: Song Repertoire in Elementary Music Curricula

Kathy Robinson

Songs are the bedrock of elementary music education programs and we teach them for many reasons, including to learn musical concepts, to develop singing skills and cultural understanding, to build community, and for enjoyment and entertainment, to name a few. As individual music educators, we also bear nearly complete responsibility for our song choices, including whose songs we choose and how those songs are taught. Our song choices are based on music and experiences from our childhood, our education and our community experiences which, for most Alberta music educators, has been predominantly in the western music realm. For those whose childhood was not rooted in the White western world, their music teacher education program undoubtedly was.

That long tradition of western musical education has left us with a curriculum and a practice that most often perpetuate one way of seeing and being musical in the world—a Eurocentric approach. In Alberta, that Eurocentricity can be seen in the current Grade 1–6 music curriculum (Alberta Education 1989), which prizes conceptual understanding of music and a bel canto approach to singing, and which, among other ideas, acknowledges transmission of music via staff notation alone. Driving this curriculum has been a canon of songs passed down and passed on almost without question for many years.

The Eurocentricity of our curriculum has become increasingly at odds with the children that we teach, many of whom do not bring that Eurocentric musical heritage to school as many of us once did. It was projected by Statistics Canada (2011) that in 15 years, by

2036, only 57 per cent percent of Albertans will have European roots, as opposed to 70 per cent in 2016. Research has also shown how important it is for students to see themselves and their music and culture visible in the classroom in a way that validates and values them (Gay 2000).

In teaching that 1989 curriculum to 21st-century Alberta students, a number of music educators have begun to decentre the Eurocentric paradigm. They are including songs of the cultural makeup of the children that they teach and songs of unfamiliar cultures, and they are teaching them orally, with less attention to conceptual understanding and more to context. While some music educators have begun to implement change, others may not have thought of or heard of this Eurocentric lens, or may have felt that they did not have the skills or knowledge to respond. This Eurocentric lens is indeed a most powerful lens.

That canon or group of songs, which included predominantly European and North American folk and composed songs, has come under increased scrutiny in the past few years. Investigations by public policy scholar Theodore R Johnson III (2014a, 2014b), Lauren McDougle via her publicly shared list, entitled "Songs with a Questionable Past," (2019) and others have uncovered songs with racist or derogatory subject matter, questionable meanings and questionable origins within that canon.

Included are a number of songs such as "Oh Susannah," "Lil Liza Jane" and "Shoo Fly," whose roots are in black minstrelsy—racist American musical entertainment begun in the 1800s, with songs sung in a manner that mocked black people, portraying them as simple minded, lazy and happy-go-lucky, and delivered in blackface by mostly White musicians. The well-known "Land of the Silver Birch" and other songs such as "Lucy Locket" are also part of that canon. While these problematic songs may have been deemed acceptable decades ago, today quite a few are found to be inappropriate, insensitive and, in some cases, unseemly. Continued use of songs that are racist, stereotypical, sexualized and just plain inappropriate, along with others that have no connection to the lives of the students whom we currently teach, can put who we teach, what we teach and, most especially, the songs that we teach in an exclusionary and adverse paradigm.

> When we teach music, we teach a subject that incorporates cultural, social, and expressive elements. A song carries with it the history of the person who wrote it or transmitted it. A song provides a window into the past, whether that be an angst-filled love song, an angry call for change, or a song that tells of a historical conflict. If we want to categorize something as part of a canon, then we must justify its inclusion based on the entirety of the song and not exclude aspects that may be difficult to address or based on our ignorance; otherwise, we become complicit. (Kelly-McHale 2018, 62)

A recommended song list created for Alberta's proposed new K–2 music curriculum by subject "expert" William French was leaked to the public in October 2020, when it was revealed that a substantial number of these problematic songs were included (French 2020a). Included in the list were the song adopted as the anthem of the US Confederacy ("Dixie") and other songs in the minstrel tradition, no Canadian songs or songs in other languages (except "Frere Jacques" and "La Cucaracha"), and no Indigenous songs. Stephanie Schuurman-Olson's investigation of the list (French 2020b) revealed that the most recent song was composed in 1959 and that 86 per cent of the songs had British or American origins. While some of the songs in the leaked document have been removed and some Canadian songs added, what remains is still a stark exemplar of the Eurocentricity of 21st-century Alberta's proposed new music curriculum (Neustaeter 2021).

This proposed K–2 song list was revealed in the middle of a fall 2020 graduate course that I taught at the University of Alberta entitled "Singing in Elementary Music." Eighteen elementary music teachers in western Canada were enrolled in the class, which explored song repertoire pedagogy and the curriculum in which the songs were housed. Our initial experiences included reading several articles on singing and cultural understanding (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck and Crawford 2013), the Eurocentricity of North American curricula (Hess 2018), repertoire as pedagogy (Goetze 2017) and decolonizing music education (Hess 2015), and attending a webinar given by Brandi Waller-Pace, Lorelei Batislaong and Michelle McCauley (2020) on decolonizing the music room. Our first assignment was to write a three- to five-page paper addressing the question of how, in our teaching, we are challenging, or plan to challenge, the Eurocentric focus of our K–6 music

curriculum song repertoire and how we might have unknowingly reinscribed its Eurocentric focus. The papers submitted were powerful and personal reflections on practice and pathways forward and were as diverse as the students themselves. Three of those papers are included in this section of *A Fine Facta*.

This journey to wrest our music curriculum from the vicelike grip of Eurocentricity is a personal one for all of us: it is a career-long pursuit and one in which each of us begins at a different entry point. It is also an emotional journey that caused some of us to worry about the effects of our past practices and repertoire choices on our students. I believe that in one—or several—of these papers, elementary music educators in Alberta and North America at large can see themselves—their practice, their thoughts, their actions—and think about how they might start or continue to move forward on this path toward a more inclusionary model of music education. We have taken Maya Angelou's words to heart on this journey and hope that you may as well: "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."[1]

Note

1. This quote, attributed to Maya Angelou, is from https://theysaidso.com/quote/maya-angelou-do-the-best-you-can-until-you-know-better-then-when-you-know-better (accessed January 7, 2021).

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Decentring the Eurocentric Focus in a Music Classroom: A Letter for Consideration

Connie Ohlmann

Dear Elementary Music Teacher

I would like to share a story with you that took place in 2012, eight years ago, at a Music Together class. These weekly morning classes were a wonderful bonding time for my little family; we sang, danced, played instruments, laughed—so many of the joyful experiences that happen daily in our elementary music classes. One Saturday morning, at the start of a new term, I realized that Music Together had removed the song "Shoo, Fly!" from its program (Fernandez 2012). I was indignant—I had grown up singing this song. I loved this song; my children loved this song. Why in the world would this song be removed? I remember (and I cringe at this now) talking with the instructor about the shortsightedness of this "politically correct" move.

I later learned that the removal of this song was because of its racist history (Ellingsen 2019). "Shoo, Fly" is just one of many, many examples of music that has been written to dehumanize Black people (Olivia 2015). I was ashamed of my initial reaction. The use of such songs is one example of how our society continues to uphold systems of racism and White privilege. I cannot imagine being consistently subjected to music that was written to mock my skin colour, my culture, my speech, my personhood. Yet here I was, faced with the fact that not only is this kind of music everywhere, I had unknowingly perpetuated these racist systems. I needed to do better.

Over the past few years, I have actively been working on removing songs with racist roots and other questionable histories from my curriculum. This is an ongoing process; in fact, just three months ago I became aware of the questionable history of "Liza Jane" and "Skip to My Lou" (McDougle 2019)—two songs that I have used regularly throughout my teaching career until recently. This was a stark reminder that I cannot become complacent; the work is never done and is a continually evolving journey.

The removal of songs is one step toward a more ethical music program, but it is just that—only one step. This journey toward a socially just classroom is about much more than just repertoire choices. I would like to share with you some of the lessons that I have learned so that together we can continue the work, have meaningful dialogue and hold each other accountable.

Principle #1: Representation Matters

I am a white female. *I* am everywhere. I have never had difficulty seeing myself in films, books, videos, classroom posters. Have you? For most of my life it did not occur to me that my skin colour being consistently shown in advertisements and media was a product of

my privilege. This blind spot is highlighted in a "Song of the Week" lesson segment I developed and used a number of years ago in my teaching. Each week I would introduce a new listening piece. As a class, we would listen quietly and watch a video of the song being performed, and then I would post a small poster of the artist on a timeline bulletin board. Toward the end of the year, there were nearly 30 artists and composers featured on this bulletin board.

One day as I looked at the display as a whole, I realized that almost all of my posters featured White male artists/composers, mostly of Western European and/or American descent. A handful showed White female artists and Black male artists; there was one poster of a Black female artist. And *zero* posters of any other races. What did my students learn when they looked at that wall? Although at the time I did not realize I was contributing to systemic issues of race and privilege in my music room, the hidden curriculum being presented time and again was that the music of White artists *is superior*, the music of Black artists is *inferior*, and the music of other races *isn't even worthy* of being shared in music class. I was contributing to the "Eurocentric focus [which] … reinscribes hierarchies of race" (Hess 2018, 129). This realization was gut wrenching.

I later removed my "Song of the Week" bulletin board and replaced it with a world map. In conjunction with a song project that I will discuss later in more detail, my students were invited to place a pin on the map that they felt represented their family. Many placed the pin where they themselves were born, and many placed a pin on a country or region that represented their family's history. During class, students would often gaze at the map in search of their pin; the map and the pins were a symbol that demonstrated my belief that every person in the room mattered. My hope was that every student saw themselves represented tangibly on that map.

I started to look at the other visuals in my classroom through this new lens. The instrument poster? All Western European instruments. The "Great Composers" poster? Mostly White males. My vast selection of children's literature? Predominantly White characters. Last year, I introduced a picture book, *All Are Welcome* (Penfold and Kaufman 2018). The beautiful illustrations feature students from diverse backgrounds engaging in activities at school. One day as I was reading and singing the story to a class of Grade 1 students, up popped the hand of little "S." She said, eyes wide and finger pointing to a young girl with brown skin and wearing a hijab, "I have never seen a girl who looks so much like me in a story book before!" Her statement has stuck with me, and it has given me a new lens through which to view the audio and/or visual materials in my classroom. Can my students see or hear themselves in the materials in our classroom?

After consciously making an effort to better represent the students that I teach, something magical began to happen—the relationships I had with my students were growing stronger. When they saw themselves as a part of the classroom and the environment, they felt more connected and those connections resulted in stronger relationships.

Principle #2: Relationships Matter

Last year I engaged in a family song project with my students, loosely based on Cathy Ward's book *The Family Folk Song Project* (2017). I invited students and families to share songs that were meaningful to them personally and to their families. I had anticipated acquiring a plethora of new songs for my music program, but I found that this wasn't what actually transpired. Rather than a focus on the songs, the conversation often also turned to the children and their families. I learned more about my students through that project—about the countries they came from, the languages they spoke, the instruments they played at home, the music they liked to listen to on their personal devices—than I had in my previous nine years of teaching at this school. I also felt more connected to parents, with some sending me videos and personal e-mails and purposefully seeking me out to engage in further conversations at school events.

Goetze (2017) describes her journey toward a musical model "driven by social justice rather than only musical goals" (p 320). She states, "I stopped looking for music from diverse cultures and started looking for *people* who could present the music live within a rehearsal" (p 324). Goetze goes on to talk about how much her choir rehearsals transformed when people became "the source of songs" (p 327). The idea of focusing on the people over the music sat with me and

reminded me of moments when I had shifted the focus in my own classroom in a similar way.

Last year, I had some guests share music in my classroom, both in person and after we moved to the virtual learning environment. One particularly powerful moment for me was when a friend of mine, an educational assistant at our school, had tears spring to her eyes when I sang her a Polish song that she had taught me. She said that nobody ever sang *her* music anymore *to her*—she was always the one singing to her children to preserve her culture and childhood. The power of being sung to was palpable. Through an invitation to share meaningful music, my students and I learned far more than a song. We became connected to a person, to her story and to her song. Without trust and a relationship, this sharing would never have occurred.

Relationships matter in this work. Relationships help us truly get to know people and to engage in music that matters to them. Relationships open up the dialogue about music and allow us to learn the stories of the music that we are being gifted.

Principle #3: The Stories Matter

"Songs are not neutral, but carry with them multiple meanings associated with histories, belief systems, habits, emotions, and ways of thinking of different peoples" (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck and Crawford 2013). Clearly, the meaning should not be separated from the music, yet it is so rare to see the stories and context of songs in music teaching resources. For example, "Shake the Papaya Down" is a catchy song in the GamePlan music series (Kriske and DeLelles 2008, 10). At the top of the musical score, it simply notes that the song is "Jamaican Folk." No other contextual information is provided. What is this song about? Is this song connected to the political history of Calypso music from Trinidad (Wahl 2018)? What does the song mean *to the people who sang it*? Are there any primary source recordings of the song, so that I and my students can understand how the music is felt in its origin, and not in a "whitewashed" version that can be heard on YouTube (Visual Musical Minds 2017)? The fact that this song is completely decontextualized in every resource and workshop in which I have heard it is a blatant example of how music programming and teachers like myself have perpetuated colonization—the act of taking—in our music rooms.

I now understand that resources must contain contextual information—the stories of the song, recordings of the song, the people behind the song. Without these stories we are perpetuating colonization. It is our responsibility to first and foremost honour the cultures and the traditions we are representing in our music programs. This responsibility must "take precedence over any other reasons for choosing a song" (Stone 2017, 239).

Final Thoughts

As noted earlier, I am still on this ever-evolving journey of learning. In fact, I sometimes wonder if my efforts to *de*centre my perspective unintentionally result in *re*centring. For example, I was recently looking through some of my previous concert programs. These programs were intentionally designed to include traditions representative of the students in my school. Despite diverse musical choices, I realized that each finale song in the concerts was written or arranged by a White man—"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," by Johnny Marks; "Walkin' in the Air," by Howard Blake; "Viva la Musica," by Brian Hiller and Don Dupont. By consistently having the finale, arguably the most important piece in a concert, representing a White perspective, was I unintentionally reinforcing Eurocentric hierarchies of race (Hess 2018)?

This work is messy and I still find myself stumbling. But I am hoping that together we can work to offer music programming that does not perpetuate harm, that is representative of our students, that prioritizes relationships and respects the stories of the songs that we teach. I am looking forward to continuing to engage in this ongoing conversation with you as we learn and make changes together.

Sincerely

Connie

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Journey Toward Decolonization: From the Outside, In

Caitlin Oberhofer

Decolonization is a powerful and important act in danger of becoming a buzzword. Colonization is rooted in most people, places and institutions in Western society to some degree, often particularly White people—which implicates me. These deep roots require depth of action in order to be thoroughly and meaningfully addressed. Decolonizing work is intensely personal, thorough and lifelong. The word *decolonization* was introduced to me several years ago in a conversation with my mentor through the IndSpire Peer Mentorship Program, a program connecting Indigenous mentors with educators seeking to engage Indigenous perspectives in the classroom. We were talking about how it can be difficult to ask for answers to questions of a racial and cultural nature, and she recommended I read *White Fragility*, by Robin DiAngelo (2018). I began that year on a search for humility—one of the sacred teachings of Cree culture that resonated with me as an area for growth—but delving into DiAngelo's assessment of the world of Whiteness turned my eye inward, away from my actions and toward the internal processes that influenced the *way* I address colonization. I believe that when we address barriers in Western culture within ourselves, such as White supremacy culture, decolonizing work can be so much more powerful and real.

Decolonization and antiracism work go hand in hand and, because of the internal presentations of colonization, they are not a thing to be *done*, but a journey that we each must undertake. From a music education perspective, Chávez and Skelchy (2019) recognize that decolonization involves "1) decentering western art music as the focus of music studies, 2) listening to and implementing Indigenous and non-Eurocentric methodologies and knowledge systems, and 3) implementing decolonizing approaches in the classroom and in research practice" (p 118). They list these behaviours in what I see as a sequence from most visible to least; it is important to recognize this because limiting oneself to visible decolonizing efforts fails to shift the underlying attitudes and behaviours that stem from colonized society mindsets. These passive colonized constructs within ourselves are just as damaging, and addressing these unconscious biases is vital in order to "challenge White supremacist control over images of Blackness" and Indigenous culture (Wahl 2018, 512).

Decentring western art music and Eurocentric music culture in my classroom work is a large, lifelong project that began by trying to understand how best to represent Indigenous music in the classroom. This led me to understand how Eurocentrism dominates the curriculum and our classroom work. I began with the Indigenous music repertoire that existed for me at the time, which was almost nonexistent. I had never used the "Canoe Song" or its partner song, "Land of the Silver Birch," which weren't even authentic representations of Indigenous culture but are so often a first stopping point for music educators seeking Indigenous music. In my first year of teaching, I learned that the students had done a great deal of work with these songs the previous year, and I wanted to find something new for them. The advice I was given by our First Nations, Métis and Inuit consultant team was to use music from Treaty 6 territory. But I was still trying to understand the difference between sacred and social music, and the

context behind varying musics for Indigenous peoples across Canada; because I was only just beginning to understand my role in a Treaty relationship, this advice didn't give me the direction I was hoping for. My interpretation of it, however, led me to the understanding that context and place matter, and increased my confusion about—but also my awareness of—the potential ownership and sacredness of songs not only in local Indigenous cultures, but around the world.

I quickly realized through limited Internet research that many sources for potential classroom songs weren't reliable, and I couldn't find sources that spoke specifically about the people who live here—in Edmonton, in Alberta, sometimes even in Canada. Incorporating electric powwow music (or powwow step) from A Tribe Called Red and other contemporary artists made sense for engaging my students in Indigenous musics, and I was able to use that as a leaping-off point for exploring traditional music from local artists. My work as a lead teacher for Indigenous education at my school allowed me to understand simultaneously with my investigations the level of oppression and harm done through colonialism and through mismanagement of how educators and Western society portray Indigenous peoples. This shaped how I sought Indigenous music representation—by wanting to represent Indigenous peoples from their own perspective, rather than from the perspective of colonizers (as had been done in the past). This completely changed how I approach the "acquisition" of songs for the classroom, and the importance of the act of *receiving* a song as being part of a reciprocal relationship with a culture bearer.

I have been learning for several years about Indigenous music, and clearly there is yet more to know; in this way I realize that, as music educators, the best work we can do in representing world music is through our pedagogy and attitudes, not specifically and wholly through our content. Through my own exploration of Indigenous musics and by working closely with Indigenous educators and culture bearers, I have shaped my understanding of how vital my choices as an educator are in representing cultures that are not my own.

Knowing and teaching songs from a variety of cultures is only one part of providing adequate representation in the music classroom. Equally important is an educator's understanding of cultural values and perspectives, and the stories that provide meaning and context to how those songs function within a larger, more complex system of culture. While rooting out problematic repertoire, particularly through the lists of racist and/or problematic songs compiled by Lauren McDougle (2019) and Martin Urbach (2020), has been an important start, acquiring new songs with less of a Eurocentric focus is a process that I would like to engage in over the course of my career. I am wary of fervent song collecting of non-Western songs for the sake of using them as replacement songs, because this type of collection process to benefit myself is uncomfortably parallel to colonizing behaviours. In this sense, I am patient as I learn songs from unfamiliar cultures slowly, over time, through direct connections with culture bearers who can transmit the context, meaning and impact of a piece with fair compensation. In this process I also learn alongside my students in a collaborative environment, and model for my students how to approach culturally significant art forms through relationships and reciprocity.

"[L]istening to and implementing Indigenous and non-Eurocentric methodologies and knowledge systems" (Chávez and Skelchy 2019) is a stage that I find meaningful for my practice, and an area where I have found a great deal of change. Rather than trying to adapt my teaching processes to fit into the identity of an elementary music teacher as I have known it, I have been encouraged by my studies in Indigenous ways of knowing to step outside of colonized pedagogy and explore what music making could look like, using Indigenous and non-Eurocentric ways of knowing and learning. Leaving students additional room for interpretation of stories and music and embracing orality as a strength with as much footing as Western standard notation literacy have deeply enriched my practice.

I would suggest that limiting decolonizing behaviours to surface-level, visible efforts such as scrutinizing repertoire and contextualizing is in and of itself a colonizing behaviour. We need to look to Indigenous, Black, Brown and Asian leaders in this field to help us understand how far and how deep decolonization could reach, and what this looks like. For me, as a White educator, to decide that investigating repertoire is enough without deeply considering my pedagogy, for example, is me as a beneficiary of colonization, using my unearned power to decide how much I am willing to give up, rather than investigate what my students need,

what community needs and what society needs. Popular pedagogical approaches such as Kodály and Orff are not untainted or unbiased—they each hold tenets and preferences that further the sense of *otherness* in non-Western musics (Oberhofer 2020). Blind allegiance to any pedagogical method is not recommended lest it "take the place of critical thought and agency" and alienate educators from their intentions and purpose (Benedict 2009, 218).

My own pedagogy is a mix of Orff and Kodály, trauma-sensitive approaches, and culturally responsive teaching—heavily influenced by my own values, personal training and experience, and biased perspective of what students need. I have always valued story and context, and my experiences studying Indigenous pedagogies through Trudy Cardinal and Sharla Peltier at the University of Alberta have cemented this love of story and its power in teaching music. On the surface, choosing Indigenous pedagogies and perspectives as a way of combatting colonialism in the classroom may seem biased toward my Indigenous student population. However, education scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) argues that developing students' cultural competency and respect for unfamiliar cultures can be achieved through culturally relevant pedagogy, which includes students developing cultural fluency in at least one culture other than their own. Learning Indigenous pedagogies from Indigenous educators as a framework for classroom learning can therefore benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Schooling, and music education in particular, has the potential to be a finding place for students, where we can provide opportunities for children to learn through themselves, find balance and honour their personal stories and worlds. Lessard (2015) describes this "phenomenon of experience and how experience shapes our relationship long after the initial conversation occurs" (p 4), encouraging school curriculum-making worlds to balance with home and community curricula. Imagine the educational power of musical experiences that connect meaningfully and personally to our students—and to ourselves. Peltier (2017) notes that "Indigenous ways of coming to know and Indigenous knowledge have been marginalized in the formal Western-European-based educational system and when oral language is considered as a teaching method, it has historically been the literate Western tradition that is implemented" (p 6). Music education is no exception, as exemplified by the literacy-heavy music curriculum in Alberta. It is important to me to continue learning about Indigenous orality teaching methods and understanding how to decolonize orality in music education.

Reading "Troubling Whiteness: Music Education and the 'Messiness' of Equity Work" Hess (2018) opened my eyes to the potential problems that come with decontextualizing Western music. Through exploration of three pedagogical models, Hess (2015) also suggests that neglecting the context of the Eurocentric works that we handle in class could unconsciously give them power. This lack of context also implies an assumption that the student population inherently and intuitively understands or is fluent in Eurocentric cultural practices. Continually reflecting on my practice, particularly by listening to the voices of Black, Brown, Indigenous and Asian persons who are experts in their lived experiences and by dialoguing with other educators with similar decolonizing goals, is important in order to continue to modify and improve my practice.

Pursuing a decolonized music classroom means constantly reminding myself of where I'm heading, redefining and reunderstanding what that means through research, listening and open-mindedness to the evolution of the term, and being willing to correct my course along the journey. I go into this work now with the *expectation* that I will make mistakes, and that I won't consistently walk the good path—and recognizing that I will have to fight my perfectionism, sit with my discomfort and make right the wrongs which I will (likely unwittingly) commit.

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My Plan to Decolonize My Music Room

Barbara Garside

In the past two years that I have been teaching, I have been learning more and more about the term *decolonizing the music room*. I agree with the idea, but it seems like such an overwhelmingly large task to undertake that I have felt too intimidated to truly begin the process. I have followed along as my fellow educators discussed and shared things that they learned about songs with questionable pasts, and quietly removed those songs from my repertoire—though I never took it upon myself to be a part of those discussions or to look into the history of songs on my own. Instead, I just used a piece of music until I heard that I shouldn't. I know that, even if it is difficult, it is time now to move forward, work on moving away from the Eurocentric focus that I am so used to and comfortable with, and start incorporating appropriate and correct music from a variety of cultures into my music program because "it is beyond the education of music. It is about a comprehensive education of humans as social beings and music as a human endeavor" (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck and Crawford 2013, 202).

The big question is: how am I going to go about doing this? My first step is to become educated. I need to continue to learn about the concept of decolonizing the music room. I can do that by continuing to read related literature and attend professional development seminars about the topic. I also need to learn about the cultures that I want to share with my students so that what I share with them is accurate and doesn't contribute to any false stereotypes because "while stereotypes may portray partial pictures of a culture, they can also be inaccurate, outdated or completely wrong" (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck and Crawford 2013, 207). This step isn't a one-and-done step either—it will be an ongoing process. There will always be new research to read. I will also need to be constantly learning about different cultures because "culture is not fixed, but is in a constant state of flux" (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck and Crawford 2013, 205).

Education must come first so that I have the skills and knowledge to, next, properly examine my current beliefs and practices within my music classroom. Are there songs that I should be retiring? What I love most about music educators is that we don't keep our knowledge hidden, buried away from other educators. Music educators love to share and collaborate, helping each other through the challenges of the ever-evolving world of teaching. Educators and those who are passionate about turning the music room into a welcoming, decolonized space want to share what they have learned. They want other music teachers to take what they have learned and start the process of decolonizing their own music classrooms. I plan on using the resources from sites such as Decolonizing the Music Room (https://decolonizingthemusicroom.com/) and Lauren McDougle's list of "Songs with a Questionable Past" (2019) to help me in my own process of decolonizing my music room. While these resources are invaluable, they are just that—resources, springboards. They don't replace the need to personally do the work, because I believe that doing the work myself will create more meaningful knowledge.

To be honest, I have slowly begun to do this and it is really hard. As I read through Lauren McDougle's list of "Songs with a Questionable Past" (2019), it hurts as I see so many songs that I love listed, especially when I know it is a song that I know my students love. For example, I love the song "Chicken on a Fencepost." It is an easy song to teach, the game is so much fun, and it is great for teaching tika tika. The entry in McDougle's list says that there are derogatory terms for African Americans in later verses. Part of me wants to tell myself that it is okay to use the song because the verse I use is okay,

but then I think about an analogy I was taught growing up. We were making brownies, and at the end, my youth leader, before putting the batter into the pan, brought out a jar of dirt and dumped it in. We were all shocked and asked her why she did it. She told us it was okay because the rest of the ingredients were still good—there was just now a little bit of dirt in it. None of the girls wanted to eat it; the little bit of dirt ruined it for us. Thinking about that, how can I feel okay knowing that there is something in the song, even if it is in a different verse, that has dirtied it, that could potentially hurt someone? I do not want to be someone who perpetuates racism. Thus, I am going to have to be careful about the repertoire I use in my class and think long and hard about whether or not it is a song I want to be using. An easy way to do this is to check McDougle's list, and if it is there, then I place it to the side, do more research and decide if it is a piece that belongs in my classroom. This, like education, will be an ongoing process.

I also need to look at what music I emphasize. I know that when I do music appreciation and listening activities with my classes, I tend to focus on Eurocentric repertoire. At the beginning of this year, I did a unit on music and emotions with my students. I created a playlist of classical music and had students tell me how the music made them feel. I explained that music can make us all feel differently, especially if we have different connections to the music. At my school, like many, the white population is the minority. The majority of students are Middle Eastern and South Asian, and I also have quite a few Black students. Not once did I stop and think that maybe I should include non-Western instrumental music. Though my students were able to recognize a few of the more famous pieces that I included, most of them had no connection to the music at all. None of the music I chose was inappropriate, but I could have been more inclusive in my repertoire selections, and I plan to be in the future.

As I work on removing inappropriate repertoire from my classroom, I need to find music to replace it so that there isn't a vacuum that sucks in more Eurocentric repertoire. Ilari, Chen-Hafteck and Crawford (2013) suggest that "apart from searching from songs on the internet or recorded media, teachers can also connect with members of different cultural communities, who are often happy to share their cultural heritage. This includes inviting parents and relatives of students, who come from other cultures, to share their musical experiences and cultural heritage with the class" (p 211). I will also make sure that I learn how to teach the repertoire from new cultures and will strive for authenticity. Stone (2017) explains that "in order to do justice to another culture's music, music educators would be well served to

- study how to produce, model, and instruct students in using the proper vocal tone;
- find and share both poetic and word-for-word translations of the music's lyrics;
- learn and impart information about the language and the significance of the text;
- study pronunciation and strategize how to address unfamiliar sounds in rehearsals; and
- research the social, political and religious contexts in which the culture's music is sung and discuss the significance of how this music functions within its culture today" (p 237–38).

I love this concept and plan to refer to it continually as I discover new repertoire from cultures that are not my own.

Another thing that I need to do in my plan is to be patient with and kind to myself because "striving for authenticity in learning and teaching any new type of music is a journey" (Stone 2017, 239). I am not going to magically overnight become this perfect teacher who teaches without any bias and brings all her students to a high level of cultural valuing. I am human, I will make mistakes, it will take me time. I will need to "watch for cultural assumptions that are possible in [my] everyday teaching interactions and address them openly when they occur" (Hess 2018, 140). I also know that this needs to be a lifelong pursuit, so I need to be careful not to burn myself out. I need to start small. I can't expect myself to dig deep into every single song I use. I can start by digging into one song a month, while making sure to use McDougle's list to ensure that there is nothing inherently wrong with the other repertoire that I am using. I can choose a new culture each year to dive into. After 5 years, I will have 60 solid pieces that I will have confidence in using and will be able to comfortably teach music from five different cultures. Imagine after 10, 15 or even 20 years how strong my program can be if I continuously work at it, one step at a time.

Now, I have called many of these things *steps*, implying that this is a linear, step-by-step process. I know that this isn't the case, though. It is more like a bunch of yarn tangled together. You start with one colour and start pulling it out so that you can get to another colour and another. Eventually you are working on all the colours at the same time; it is getting easier to untangle everything, but it is always there for you to be working on—for your entire life, until your own thread of life is cut. I know that this work is going to be messy, I know that it is going to be hard, but I am ready to face it head on.

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