MUSIC IN SOCIETY AND IN EDUCATION

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Forty or so years ago, those countries which had music in schools based their curricula on musical appreciation and class singing, involving a mixture of mainly post-seventeenth century Western classical music and settings of European and North American folk songs. Despite the existence of Orff instruments, in most schools instrumental tuition only took place outside the classroom during extra-curricular time. Although some pupils studied rudiments, harmony and counterpoint, virtually no-one studied composition until they were in Higher Education. By contrast, as we enter the new millenium, teachers in many countries have become quite accustomed to incorporating all sorts musical activities into the classroom, involving everyone in not only singing, but playing an array of instruments, composing and improvising as well as listening to a huge variety of musical styles including popular, folk and classical music from all over the world.

Such rapid and radical changes in the music classroom go hand in hand with music's roles in the wider society; and these roles are themselves bound up with much broader social developments concerning for example, demography, technology, globalisation, gender, social class and race relations. The increased flow of peoples across national borders has brought a number of differing musical styles and cultures into close proximity. Ever more efficient, effective and cheap equipment for sound-recording and reproduction, along with the expansion of the music industry, has made a huge variety of global musical styles available, at the flick of a switch, to large numbers of listeners from almost any walk of life. Electronic musical instruments and computers have profoundly affected the ways in which music is performed, composed and stored. The relationships of people from differing social groups to music have changed: women are less restricted in their musical roles than they once were; certain styles of music such as folk and classical, are no longer exclusively associated with certain social classes; and particular musics no longer 'belong' solely to particular ethnic groups. At the same time the role of music in articulating local and national identities is being strengthened in many parts of the world.

In the first part of this chapter I will examine some concepts which can help to increase our understanding of the connections between music and wider social factors such as some of the

examples mentioned above. The discussion will concentrate on various ways in which different social groups can be understood to relate to music. Then in the second part I will illustrate how the relationships of different social groups to music impinge upon the music classroom. Finally, I will suggest that an understanding of such factors can be helpful in the development of teachers' sensitivity to our own and our pupils' musical abilities, values and needs.

Music in society

Social groups

Some of the most familiar and well-researched social groups are those of social class, ethnicity, race, gender, age, religion, nationality, the family and sub-culture. We can understand society as being made up of different groups such as these, but at the same time, social groups are bound to overlap each other. It is helpful to distinguish three different ways in which this overlap occurs.

One way concerns the identification of groups. I will take as examples the two groups of ethnicity and social class. An ethnic group can be identified by a combination of the cultural practices, educational backgrounds, language, religion, race, nationality, geographical location, and related issues concerning the people in the group. A social class can be identified also by the cultural practices and educational backgrounds, as well as the economic status of its members, or the kind of jobs they have. Thus cultural practices and education play a part in the identification of both these groups: or in other words, similar characteristics may at times be relevant in identifying different social groups. Secondly, overlap also occurs in terms of how groups fit in with each other. Using the same two examples, some ethnic groups might be found mainly within one social class – such as gypsies in certain European countries; whilst other ethnic groups might be spread across several different classes – such as Welsh-speaking people living in the United Kingdom.

A third way in which social groups overlap, is through the individuals who are their members. It makes no sense to conceive of social groups as being contrasted to, or juxtaposed with, individuals. Each person is always simultaneously a member of several different social groups, some of which may correspond with each other, some of which may conflict, and some of which may change. For example, a person may move from one social class to another over the course of time, or may live in a working-class family situation whilst holding a middle-class job; a person may have mixed ethnicity, but may identify more with one ethnic group than other; a person may even undergo a sex-change operation. Nonetheless, in all these examples it would be impossible

for the person to altogether avoid standing in some relation to the social groups of class, ethnicity and gender. Even a person who is explicitly committed to a position of extreme individualism has acquired his or her individualist perspective through social interaction, enculturation and membership of a variety of social groups. When considering social groups, it is necessary to look at how individuals negotiate their positions within groups, and how they are actively involved in constructing and defining the groups they are in.

Social groups relating to music

How do social groups relate to music? A summary response to this question might be, that to varying degrees, people in different social groups are often found to engage in different musical practices, and to attach different meanings and values to different kinds of music. Three simple examples would be: the majority of listeners to the British Broadcasting Company Radio 3 (the well-established, mainly classical music station) are white, middle class and over the age of thirty-five; most rap artists (not all) are black and male; most famous classical composers are white and male. But even in these brief examples, I have referred to four social groups (race, social class, age and gender), three musical practices (listening, performing and composing), and two kinds of music (classical music and hip-hop). Implicit in the examples are also further issues concerning the meanings and values placed upon the music, the manner in which the groups form around the music, and the ways in which individuals within the groups see themselves in relation to the music. Because of all this complexity and diversity, it is helpful to break down the question of how social groups relate to music, into areas. Here, I will consider the question in terms of four areas: musical practices, musical meaning, music itself, and individuals' musical identity.

a) Musical practices

We can conceive of musical practices in three broad ways. One concerns the *production* of music, and involves considering *who* produces *what* music and *how* they go about it. Social groups such as those already mentioned can be looked at in these terms: different social classes, ethnic groups, gender or age groups and other similar groups, are characteristically involved in producing different types of music in different ways, depending on the historical era, geographical location and other contexts. At the same time, musical production throws up new, specifically musical groups, not identified in general sociological terms: these include groups of performers, composers, recording engineers, students, as well as sub-groups within each of these such as trumpeters, singers, professors of composition, free-lance song–writers, and so on. For the sake of clarity, from here I will refer to non-musical social groups such as ethnicity or gender,

as ‘large-scale social groups’, and to groups of musical producers as more specific, smaller-scale musical groups.

A second area of musical practice involves *distribution*: how music is passed from the producer to the consumer. Different distribution mechanisms are, for example, sound-recordings, live concerts, TV and radio, busking on the streets, religious ceremonies, or teaching. Different large-scale social groups may be involved in different modes of distribution, and again, as with musical production, the modes of distribution themselves imply more specific, smaller-scale groups of people putting them into action, such as people working in the recording industry, music administrators, teachers, and so on.

A third area of musical practice concerns *reception*, or in other words, how people use music. They might listen to CDs in their homes, listen to the radio at work, go to concerts or dance to music. Again, different large-scale social groups tend to take part in different reception practices, and different reception practices throw up smaller groups specifically related to music: listeners to charts pop radio stations, opera-goers, ballroom dancers or clubbers are examples.

b) Musical meaning

In the philosophy of music, questions are raised about what music means or how it takes on its meaning. But when considering the relationships of social groups to music, we would be more interested in asking how different social groups *construct* musical meanings, what those meanings are, how groups come to agree upon them, and how they come to contest them, both within and between groups. To some extent musical meanings are articulated by lyrics or libretti, but word-setting can on no account be said to be necessary for musical meanings to arise. Meanings also derive from the social groups, musical practices, and other factors with which music is conventionally associated. Some music takes on meanings by virtue of its repeated use within certain contexts: a National Anthem is associated with the royalty of a country, or in a Republic, with the national identity in general; a theme from Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite, because of its use in an advertisement in the UK over several years (‘Everyone’s a fruit and nut-case’) makes many UK residents think of a particular make of chocolate. But music also takes on vaguer, more contestable meanings arising from its social contexts. Some such meanings will be generally understood, others will be more personal and individual. For example, on hearing the opening of a heavy metal number, the majority of people could, if they were asked, make a fairly accurate guess as to the likely clothes and hair-styles of the band-members, their gender, or the

probable ethnicity and age of their fans. At the same time, opinion is likely to be divided as to whether the music is good, bad, indifferent, immoral, ethical, aggressive or sensitive. Whatever each individual's position is on such factors, they are a part of the meanings which the music transmits to that person.

c) Music itself

As already observed, different social groups to varying extents, engage in different musical practices involving different kinds of music. It is important to take note of the characteristics of the music itself, otherwise we could end up leaving out of consideration the very object which is so central to our concerns. A friend of mine who is a music sociologist was amused when she consulted some market research on musical taste. Under the category 'dance music' the statistics showed that this was the favourite music of people over the age of fifty-five, and of people under the age of twenty-five. What the statistics did not say, was that the nature of what is called 'dance music', and the musical practices and meanings associated with it, are so different for each of these age-groups, as to be virtually unrelated to each other. The statistical information on its own, without reference to the nature of the music involved, would represent only a partial, and possibly misleading picture.

Most importantly, music itself is not merely a symptom of our musical practices and meanings, but it acts back on us, through its capacity to *influence* our beliefs, values, feelings or behaviour. For example, if a primary-school teacher asks children to dance to some fast, loud music with an explicit beat and a prominent drum-kit, the children will jump around vigorously; if they are asked to dance to soft, slow string music, they will glide about gracefully. The music itself influences their responses. By the same token, certain types of music have formal, textural or other such characteristics, which render the music more or less *suitable* for certain uses or meanings.

d) Individuals' musical identity

Finally, for many people, music helps in defining their identity as an individual within a group or groups. Individual members of peer-groups and sub-cultural groups, for example, use music as one way in which to affirm their identity within the group. This in turn, aids group-cohesiveness. Once again, the music itself is not arbitrarily chosen, but it carries appropriate meanings by dint of convention, it influences us in our responses and behaviour, and it is suitable to different degrees, for certain uses and meanings.

Music in education

If we look at music in schools, we can discern a number of patterns related to some of the issues discussed above. In brief, children from different large-scale social groups tend, by varying degrees, to be involved in different musical practices, to attach different meanings to music, to prefer different kinds of music, and to relate differently to music as individuals within their groups. These differences occur not only in their lives outside the school, but also in their engagement with music in school. Teachers are of course themselves members of diverse social and musical groups, and they also relate to music as individual members of larger groups. I will now provide some illustrations of how such factors can impinge upon the content and effects of music education. The illustrations will focus on just three social groups - class, gender and ethnicity.

Social class

I have already indicated that a class division exists in relation to musical style: although people from all social classes, especially nowadays, are quite likely to enjoy popular music (think of the late Princess Diana for example), it is mainly upper and middle class people who listen to classical music. During the 1970s and eighties, research in the sociology of music education (Vulliamy 1977a and b, Green 1988) suggested that even though schools were beginning to incorporate a variety of musical styles into the curriculum, the majority of teachers, curriculum planners and examination boards nonetheless presented classical music as the most important and legitimate musical style. In 1982 I conducted a questionnaire in sixty-one schools which included, amongst other things, asking teachers whether they taught classical music and popular music, and to give reasons for their answers. As examples of the prime place of classical music in education at that time, here are some responses to the question 'Do you teach classical music?':

> -Yes. It is part of our heritage. It contains valuable musical elements. It is essential for public examinations.
>
> -Yes. The heritage should be presented before young pupils since the opportunity would not otherwise exist. Seeds sown now may well bear fruit in later years.
>
> -Yes. It offers the widest field of musical discovery - affords the greatest satisfaction to sing, play and listen to. Any musician worth his/her salt must pass on the source of his/her lifetime enjoyment in the hope that others will derive the same pleasure from it
>
> -Of course! The reasons should be obvious: basic grounding; techniques; standard background to any other musical developments.

-Yes in so far as 'classical' = expressive, and in so far as it is an art form, and is the style of music that a) requires the greatest concentration and b) requires the greatest explanation and c) requires the greatest sensitivity.

Only three out of the sixty-one randomly selected teachers said they did not teach classical music, two without giving a reason, and the other one on the grounds that the ethnicity and the low intelligence of her pupils made it unsuitable.

Regarding popular music, teachers often used it at the end of the lesson as a 'treat', to entertain children, or to pacify 'low ability' pupils, rather than studying it seriously. Overall, their attitudes towards it contrasted starkly with those towards classical music. To illustrate this, here are some further examples of answers to the same question ('Do you teach classical music?'):

-Yes. Since children have very little knowledge of any music apart from disco/pop etc. and therefore teaching classical music broadens their musical knowledge. ...

-Yes. I introduce children to classical music. Pop music they listen to anyway, there seems little point in teaching it therefore.

-Yes. Children have 'pop' thrust upon them everyday and therefore we try to broaden their musical appreciation ...

-Yes. ... My 'boss' talks about 'the adolescent deviation around the arts'.

-Yes. I think it important that children should hear music other than the pop diet that they have fed off since they were infants. ...

-Yes. I introduce children to classical music. Pop music they listen to anyway, there seems little point in teaching it therefore.

And in response to 'Do you teach popular music?':

-No. The pupils seem sufficiently saturated in this cultural area to warrant its exclusion from the curriculum.

-No. Most teenagers surround themselves with pop music 24 hours a day. Music lessons give the opportunity to show other music exists.

In order to succeed at music in school – in terms of gaining praise, being given the opportunity to have extra-curricular instrumental lessons, passing exams and so on – it was normally necessary for pupils to accept the superiority of classical music. Not only that, but pupils who opted for music at 14+, normally required instrumental tuition, and although this was available free of charge to some extent, for a large number of children it was arranged on a private, fee-paying basis. Research suggests that one of the most significant factors in the development of young

classical musicians, is support and encouragement from their parents (Sloboda and Howe 1991). Some children came from families who did not have much interest in classical music and these children lacked such support. Furthermore, many children who did not have access to free instrumental tuition, could not afford private lessons. Therefore, whilst music education was in theory offered to all children equally, in practice, children from some particularly interested, committed or better-off social classes were more likely to benefit from and succeed at music in school, to the detriment of children from other social classes.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, music-making opportunities in schools have increased massively for all pupils since the research described above was carried out, and one particularly significant factor in the context of the present discussion, is the introduction of a greater variety of music, including 'world music' into the curriculum, along with a more serious and inclusive approach towards all kinds of music. However, very little research has been conducted since the 1980s, to ascertain whether these curriculum changes have affected patterns of social class interest or success in music education.

Gender

Recent research has enquired into the musical practices, meanings, the kinds of music and the musical identities associated with boys and girls in schools. (See *British Journal of Education*, 1993, Green 1997, O'Neill 1996 and 1997.) In 1992 I conducted a questionnaire involving music teachers in seventy-eight English secondary schools, who gave their views about boys' and girls' musical practices, abilities and inclinations, and I interviewed sixty-nine pupils aged 11-16, in small, single-sex friendship groups in two mixed inner-London comprehensives. Clear patterns emerged, both in the perceptions of teachers, and in the practices and attitudes of girls and boys.

Singing is one curriculum area towards which secondary boys are notoriously disinclined, and this was verified by both the survey and the interviews. Of the seventy-eight teachers, sixty-five said that girls were better at singing than boys, thirteen said they were equal, and no-one said boys were better. Further, the teachers overwhelmingly characterised girls as willing vocalists who enjoy singing lessons and who volunteer in large numbers for extra-curricular choral and other group singing activities, sometimes to the total exclusion of boys. The pupils agreed: a large number of girls expressed a readiness to sing, and many said that singing was seen as a girls' activity, or in the words of one eleven year-old, 'singing is girls' jobs'.

Teachers also said that far more girls than boys play orchestral instruments, mainly the flute and violin, and the piano, all of which were associated largely with classical music. One teacher mentioned that out of fifty flautists in her school, not one was a boy! Again, the pupils' responses were entirely commensurate with those of the teachers. For example, boys said things such as 'Most girls like to play the violin and the cello', and 'they don't branch out much from classical music', whereas girls said things like:

-Boys don't like music lessons.

-LG: Why do you think that is?

-Well basically in the music lessons all we do is listen to classical music ... and that sort of thing.

-It might make a difference if the music [the teachers] played was more for our age group.

-Yes, so the kind of things they played were sort of electric guitar and that sort of thing.

-Like not orchestras and that sort of thing ....

In general, girls actively avoid performance on highly technological or electric instruments, especially those associated with popular music, most notably, drums and electric guitars. But boys are responding very differently to the contemporary treatment of popular music in schools. Boys in every 11-14 age-group to whom I spoke, without exception, chorused that either they already play the drums, or that they would like to play the drums. Many complained that they were not given the chance.

-I like playing the drums but it's just that we never get a chance to express ourselves. It's just xylophones, xylophones. We would like to play drums, we would like to play guitar, we would like to play lots of things.

This interest in drumming was associated with a desire to be involved in other popular musical instruments and in sound-reproduction technology.

Whereas girls' music was understood as 'slow', popular music in which boys expressed interest, was characterised as 'fast' or 'having a beat'. A group of boys were saying that 'most girls play classical instruments':

-There are two girls in our class who play the cello I think it is.

-LG: Why do you think that is?

-'Cos they like slower music.

Not only were girls represented as preferring 'slow', 'classical' music, but teachers also characterised them as wanting to use music in order to express their feelings, and as having an

interest in the sensitive, delicate side of music. Boys, on the other hand, were not only seen to prefer 'fast' 'pop' music, but to decry music lessons mainly for fear of appearing 'cissy' or 'unmacho' (both these words were used by several teachers). Girls were seen to be lacking in confidence, but to be cooperative, hardworking and conformist; whereas boys were thought to be generally over-confident, extrovert, uncooperative, and to place more importance on what their peers thought of them, than on what their teachers told them to do.

The most striking thing about teachers' responses was that, despite this characterisation of boys as uninterested, uncooperative and negative towards music lessons, they regarded boys as excelling at composition. Contrastingly, they saw girls as dull and lacking in creative spark. Here, for example, are some comments by teachers:

> -On the whole, boys produce more imaginative work than girls.
>
> -Boys are not so afraid to be inventive, and experiment. Girls tend to stick to set forms.
>
> -Girls tend to be more traditional and conservative in their compositions...
>
> -Girls seem to have to work harder and don't have as much natural ability.
>
> -Boys seem to have a greater creative spark than girls. ... The girls seem often to be devoid of ideas, and have a problem developing musical ideas.

When talking about composition to GCSE pupils, I found that although they did not use the same terms as teachers - 'conformity' or 'creativity' for example - they once again nonetheless adopted these same characteristics in different ways. They also adopted attitudes mentioned by teachers above, such as girls expressing a lack of confidence, an interest in feelings, and doing what the teacher tells them, or boys appearing confident, uncooperative and more interested in peer-group norms than in lessons.

Some of the girls expressed a strong dislike and a debilitating lack of confidence in composition. Others viewed their compositional work with pleasure and pride. But in both cases they confirmed the teachers descriptions. For example:

> -Well I like composition when it's doing what you feel and everything, but I don't so much like the theory because you've got to learn it ...
>
> -When I like a piece [of mine] it's more, like I get this feeling, I know it's really silly but I get this feeling I think, you know, 'Ah, self-satisfaction', and I sort of like have this big glow on my face.

Some of them characterised themselves as 'incompetent' or 'confused'. All of them indicated a

reliance on the teacher, and several said they had 'done their best'. Even those who liked composition were prone to denigrate at least some of their own work or their own feelings about it in numerous asides when they described their work as 'silly', 'boring', 'horrible' and 'terrible'.

Boys displayed a completely different attitude to composition. All but one of them were positive, confident and carefree, whether or not they saw themselves as 'good' composers. They demonstrated not merely a confidence in their ability and a lack of reliance on the teacher, but a rejection of the teacher's advice and values; they presented themselves as less hard-working, yet more 'clued up' about what they needed and what they were aiming for. Rather than having 'done their best' they all indicated that they 'could have done better'. None of them mentioned his feelings.

Both teachers and pupils displayed sets of assumptions concerning the musical practices, instruments, values, and the kinds of music associated with boys and girls respectively. These assumptions cannot be dismissed as mere prejudices, for they are based on reasonable evidence from everyday life in the school. But one of the complexities of the situation arises from a tendency for *beliefs* about others and about ourselves, to act as labels and self-fulfilling prophecies (see Green 1997 for further discussion of this). Even though many teachers today are aware of gender patterns in music, the power of musical gender relations retains a very strong pull not only inside but outside the school. Teachers' good intentions and interventionary practices can not be expected to radically alter the situation, but by encouraging boys to join the choir, or making efforts to recognise and reward girls who do show imagination in their compositions, teachers can go some of the way towards breaking down the implicit divisions which are currently preventing both girls and boys from engaging in and excelling at certain musical practices.

Ethnicity

The following example is taken from research for an MA dissertation in which Andrew Alden (1998) interviewed children in a mixed-race, inner-city London primary school where about seventy per cent of the pupils spoke English as a second language. He was familiar with the school and had been a teacher there previously. The school had a written anti-racist policy and a multi-cultural curriculum, in which Alden observed lessons and curriculum materials involving music from around the world, including the rehearsal of a Hindi song for assembly on the very morning of the events related below.

During a whole-class, mixed-ethnicity session, he asked pupils about their musical tastes and the kinds of music they listened to at home. The picture that emerged was of a listenership that was almost entirely committed to charts music such as *Top of the Pops* or BBC Radio 1. But when he interviewed Asian children in small, single-ethnicity groups, Alden was presented with a very different picture. He states:

> ... although they were familiar with 'pop' music and sometimes listened to *Top of the Pops* they were all very clear that Hindi film music was the substance of their experience at home and they stated that this was their preferred music.' (p. 84)

They also told him they listened mainly to local radio stations broadcasting Hindi popular music.

Alden then conducted another whole-group session in which pupils worked together to devise a curriculum and resources that they would like to have for music in their school. At the end of the session their suggestions included only mainstream charts music, instruments associated with such music, and some of the classroom percussion instruments with which they were already familiar. During discussion afterwards, the Asian pupils in the group were silent.

> I pointed out that pupils in the school listened to a much wider range of music than those which had been suggested and asked if this range should be included. Even with such a clear lead, there was no voice strong enough to say 'Yes'. (p. 88)

Later on, he asked the Asian pupils separately why they had not spoken up, and they attributed the cause explicitly to negative peer pressure (p. 85).

A great deal has recently been made of music's ability to cross national borders, and to communicate to all people regardless of the language they speak, their cultural practices or beliefs. The multi-cultural music curriculum has grown up partly in response to the demographic changes that have brought different ethnic and national groups into close contact, as well as the developments in the music industry that have brought us 'world music', as referred to in the introduction of this chapter. One claim which is often made, is that studying world music can inculcate tolerance and respect for 'other' cultures in pupils, and many teachers will verify the beneficial effects of a global musical perspective. But very little research has so far been conducted to ascertain how successful the multi-cultural music curriculum is being in furthering inter-ethnic tolerance and understanding.

There are also issues of a different nature confronting the relationship between ethnicity and the

music curriculum. At the moment it is an entitlement of the National Curriculum, that all children should compose, perform, appraise and listen to music, individually and in groups. But this ruling has not taken account of the fact that in a small number of families from certain ethnic and/or religious backgrounds, such musical engagement is problematic. For example, some Muslim families disapprove of girls and boys making music together, or even making music at all. Very little enquiry has yet been made as to the overall social significance of this situation, although it can quite clearly put some teachers and some pupils in awkward situations.

Some implications for teachers

The diversity of the contemporary music curriculum is both an effect of, and a response to wider social patterns and changes in musical engagement in the world outside the school, such as have been discussed in this chapter. For example, the curriculum has responded to an opening-up of social class relations in music-listening habits, by including not only classical music but also popular music. Some teachers are demonstrating increased awareness of gender relations by ensuring that music composed by women is introduced, that boys are encouraged to join the choir, or girls to play the drums. Most schools are meeting demographic changes by including not only Western music but also music from other parts of the world. In such ways, teachers can appeal to and aid pupils from a larger variety of social groups than used to be the case. It is not possible, in a chapter of this length, to go into details about classroom strategies that might ameliorate some of the problem-areas discussed. I am sure readers will already have thought of various possibilities, and a consultation of some of the books in the reference list will yield other ideas. Here, I can only emphasise that, although teaching strategies which aim to combat prejudices and inequalities are of course of enormous potential value, perhaps over and above explicit practical strategies, teachers need to be continuously sensitive and responsive to the social groups and the personal musical meanings, values and identities of their pupils. Such awareness is necessary if the fullest potential – as well as the possible dangers – of a broad curriculum are to be realised in practice.

Whether you play music, sing, listen, compose, study or teach it, music can be taken on and worn rather like a piece of clothing, to indicate something about your class, ethnicity, gender, your sexuality, age, religion, sub-culture, political values and so on. It can be worn by pupils as a public expression within the school, which may reveal or may indeed conceal part of the pupils' private identity; or alternatively musical 'clothing' may be worn only in the privacy of the home or other situations beyond the school. Particularly in the case of children and adolescents who are

searching for identity as new adults in a changing society, music offers a powerful cultural symbol which aids in their adoption and presentation of a 'self'.

Coming to an increased understanding of the social processes involved in music can help to reveal some reasons why pupils from different groups engage in certain musical practices, why they avoid others, and how they respond to music in the classroom. It can help us to appreciate that pupils' responses and attitudes towards music are not just to do with innate musical ability, but also derive from the listening habits, the values and the cultural norms of the large-scale social groups to which they belong, their public and private identities and desires. In this way, we are less likely to label students 'unmusical', without first considering the deep influence of social factors on the surface appearance of their musicality. Such awareness can also contribute to increasing our own understanding of ourselves as musicians and teachers within the complex web of musical practices, meanings, styles and identities with which we all negotiate.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Andrew Alden for permitting me to refer to his dissertation, Sarah Thornton for the anecdote about statistics on dance music, and Charlie Ford for reading and commenting on a draft of this chapter.

Questions for discussion

To what extent should music in classrooms reflect the musical experiences and tastes associated with the social groups to which the pupils belong?

How might teacher awareness and sensitivity concerning the social contexts of music affect our approaches in the classroom?

Is it possible that teachers' estimations of pupils' musical ability might be negatively influenced by the teachers' own lack of familiarity with pupils' musical culture?

What are the resource implications of considering music's social contexts and social meanings?

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5,836 words total