

## Music Cultural Pedagogy in the ‘Network Society’

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### Abstract

The present contribution to theory construction in music educational research focuses on the contemporary requirements for general music education. One starting point are the normative claims of a democratic liberal education as to find in the field of critical pedagogy and the sociology of education. Another point of departure is provided by cultural sociological and rather descriptive reflections. The latter takes concern on the increasing ephemeral sociocultural contexts in postmodern ‘network’ societies. Leitmotiv questions are how to retain the democratic function of criticism in the fluxes of everyday digital music culture. Thus, a music cultural orientated concept of learning in general education is envisaged as one that takes into account both the postmodern (post-democratic) developments as well as the modern educational requirements in the frame of democratic principles. At least, the music computer and the social (cultural) network appear as an appropriated toolkit in a music cultural pedagogy. Moreover, these tools seem to provide convenient possibilities to initiate democratic and informal music learning processes that should be accompanied by continuous critical reflection. The article closes with an outlook on further needs and teaching praxis.

**Keywords:** Music Cultural Pedagogy, Network Society

### 1. Democracy and Music Education after the ‘Digital Revolution’

Henry Giroux’s (2011) claim for critical education relies on the strong “belief that education is fundamental to democracy (3)”. Thereby, general education should provide the learners with the capacity of critical reflective participation. In the music educational domain, it is Paul Woodford (2005, ix) who reminds that nearly a century ago – in the year 1916 – John Dewey published his tract about *Democracy and Education* (2008/1916), which might have been overlaid in the music educational domain by his more perceived work *Art as Experience* (1980 [1934])<sup>1</sup>. One point of Woodford’s argumentation is that, in compulsory education, pupils have to develop a kind of *musical reflective and critical thinking* (2005, ix) that provides them with the necessary capacities for an appropriate music cultural participation in democratic societies, which means cultural participation in dynamic, ever changing social and cultural contexts in the stream of global fluxes, and an increasing multiplication of aesthetic offers and individual perceptions.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas Dewey highlighted technological changes and effects of the ‘industrial revolution’ and claimed a revision or, in his words, a “reconstruction of philosophy, education, and social ideals (2008/1916, p. 285)”, now we have to struggle with the effects of the ‘digital revolution’.<sup>3</sup> It seems to be impossible to define people or pupils’ life worlds any more. Music educators are confronted with many more or less different individuals and collective life worlds<sup>4</sup> in many different social, cultural, and – concerning the music education – in the different music cultural contexts and associated expectations in the global world, within a nation, in the school and, in particular, in the classroom.

Thereby these manifold music cultural contexts can barely be imagined as containers of decreasing size-centered and placed one inside the other like a *matryoshka* doll<sup>5</sup> than rather as – in the sense of Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) cultural dimensions of globalization – interdependent, overlapping flows or *musicoscapes*.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it should be rather difficult to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also *Dewey’s Bastards: Music, meaning, and politics* (Woodford 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g. Andreas Reckwitz (2008, 235–280).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Heffernan (2011).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the actual use of the plural of life world or *people’s life* in music education (Welch und McPherson 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Also called Russian “babushka dolls”.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. e.g. Connell & Gibson (2003).

define musical norms of contents and practices in the classroom, in the curriculum as well as in didactical concepts for music education. Even if, sometimes, it might appear more comfortably – and claimed by some authors such as e.g. Robert Walker (2007) – to *save* some traditions in a sort of music cultural norm, it seems to be rather impossible to do so further on. However, what might be saved and what is even necessary to be saved in democratic constituted societies are the historical transmitted social values as particularly the achievements of the Enlightenment. In that sense, Dewey's educational claims and Woodford's demands for a music education are understood as music pedagogical guidelines strongly committed to democratic ideals<sup>7</sup> within the unfinished project of modernity in rather postmodern contexts.

## 2. A Framework for Democratic Practices in Music Education

In the music educational domain, Ruth Wright (2010) –committed to sociological concerns – claims a move to a more democratic music education. Applying Basil Bernstein's (2000) democratic rights, Wright develops a framework for democratic practices in music education (2010, 277). Wright highlights the need for *critical reflection* upon the musical and cultural givens.<sup>8</sup> Another demand is to help the pupils to develop musical and cultural autonomy *to see their own cultural images* (ib.). That should be characterized as a high ratio of music cultural autonomy versus heteronomy to take into account the impossibility of absolute autonomy and the pupils' individual predispositions and conveniences. Therefore, the pupils should be empowered *to express their opinions* and to *participate* in their music cultural environment (ib.) that has globally enlarged and diversified in the last decades. Thus, this framework proposes a – rather value- than norm-oriented – move to a critical, reflective, and democratic music education in practice; a music educational practice that is situated in between the global, dynamic fluxes of music cultural artefacts, practices, and significations.

## 3. Musical Significations: Ideal-types of Cultural Sensibility and 'Ephemerality'

Considering again the effects of the digital revolution, a look into the cultural sociology should be helpful for a better understanding of the ongoing transformations of music cultural givens and significations. François Lyotard's (1979) comment to postmodern conditions might be reminded as well as the even earlier remarks from Walter Benjamin (2011/1970/1935) about the mechanical reproduction of the work of art. In the meantime, people are confronted to an infinite virtual reproduction and juxtaposition of music cultural artefacts and significations in the global net.

In his cultural sociological analyses, Scott Lash (2002) describes a dynamic world of significations that is *non-linear*. In his view, the emerging *technological forms of life*<sup>9</sup> interact in between informational fluxes that content 'compressed information' in a 'speed-up culture' that is 'stretched-out' and 'discontinuous' (13–25). Lash's idea summarized that people in postmodern societies are confronted with an increasing 'ephemerality' of cultural artefacts, practices, and signs (Lash 2002, 18-24). The plausible descriptions and abstractions of the contemporary cultural developments contrast the idea of conventional and often focused music practices in the music educational field as, for instance, the learning of an instrument that requires rather continuous and narrow focused processes of acquisition and training. Assuming Lash's descriptions of cultural conditions – again, in Dewey's sense – the underlying philosophies of music education and associated practices seem to be in a strong need to be revised.

## 4. Dangers of Transition

Certainly, democratic (music) pedagogues have to observe the different dangers that are associated with social and cultural developments in the society. Giroux (2008) warned against the dangers coming from the increasingly generalising belief in ideas of neoliberalism.<sup>10</sup> There is the threatening '*Empire*' described by Hardt and Negri (2001) that should be observed and discussed furthermore in the musical domain as, for instance, Robert Burnett's (1996) concerns about cultural imperialism in the '*Global jukebox*'. Another is Michel Foucault's (1975) concern to analyze the different forms of control in relation to knowledge or information; issues that are even publicly discussed regarding the subtle forms of advertising and manipulation in the rapidly proliferating digital social networks. Thereby, *one* question might be whether music culture is manipulated by commercial interests or whether the music cultural artefacts are used to manipulate the consumers' behavior, or – even more likely –both. Presuming that popular and even (spiritual) art music culture artefacts and practices have probably never been independent from social and material givens, and neither from political (religious) or economic constraints, nevertheless, the next generations have to struggle with the rapidly changing and complex music cultural conditions and givens that now require a vigilant capacity of musical reflective and critical thinking in order to preserve democratic conditions for music cultural participation.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nick Stevenson's (2011) writing about an education committed to the project of constructing a 'Good' society.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. table 16.1 (ib.).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. e.g. Bruno Latour's (2005) *actor-network theory* and the idea of quasi-subjects.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Colin Crouch (2004) and Immanuel Wallerstein (2004).

## 5. Criticisms: Consensus vs. Expertise in the Flux of Music(s)

One of Lash's (2002) main points is that an understanding of *critique* as transcendental positioning is not possible anymore and that "the critique of information will have to come from inside the information itself (vii)". Thus, in the domain of art, Lash abandons formalistic approaches and favors conceptual approaches. He argues that the conceptual ideas critique is not grounding in reasoned discourse or internal reflection, but is understood as "very externalized reflexivity of unfinished processes of art (220)". So again, in the music pedagogical domain, there seems to appear the need to focus on conceptual ideas rather than formal or content-related approaches.

Music culture is not in the hands of smaller circles of experts as professional music critics or other kinds of experts anymore – if it has ever completely been. Nancy Weiss Hanrahan (2013) observes that "the recent transformations of the music world are marked by the emergence of authority of a different kind (74)". The 'official' forms of music cultural criticism have been increasingly replaced by technologically-mediated forms of cultural judgment (ib.). Thus, the imaginations of what is art – or music, or culture – are changing in the public, media-driven discourses.<sup>11</sup> According to Weiss Hanrahan, these emerging dominant forms of cultural evaluation with its digital algorithms might lead to a kind of *consensual evaluation* or understanding of music culture (78–80). Against this backdrop, she reclaims a "space of alternative readings and interpretations of music and music excellence" associated to a stronger attention to critics or criticism (83).

Regarding the question, "how to determine musical excellence?", her argumentation accentuates the need of criticism as an important counterweight to the consumerism in the probably increasing *consensual* neoliberal driven world<sup>12</sup> of (digital) music cultures.

According to that, Bruno Latour's (1991)<sup>13</sup> democratic model of 'proliferation' in the *réseau* versus 'purification' through *critique* provides an idea of supporting postmodern music cultural proliferations accompanied by democratic processes of music cultural critique. Therefore, music education has to engage in the digital music cultural worlds in the network society, which aims to provide pupils access to the digital sociocultural worlds.<sup>14</sup>

## 6. Access to Music Cultural Worlds in the Network Society

The rise of the network society has been described by Manuel Castells (2010/1996). Later on, Jan van Dijk analyzed and modeled communication in the network society (2006/1999). In his research, van Dijk observes an increasing digital divide of access to the Internet (2005). By this, the term 'access' hints on both the availability of the necessary material resources as well as the availability of the necessary cognitive capacities. Van Dijk's thesis is that people who are not regularly in progress with the ongoing digital developments and thereto required skills will lose contact with the rapid changing form of communication in their professional as well as in their private spheres. Thus, without the intense and steady formal as well as informal formation in the digital technologies, their chances to *participate* in the social, political, economic, and cultural domains will definitely regress. In an empirical investigation, van Deursen and van Dijk (2011) came to the result that the "original digital divide of physical Internet access has evolved into a divide that includes differences in skills to use the internet (893)". Thus, we might guess that musically differentiated technological skills are – and will be – essential for an access to digital music cultural worlds, too. Perhaps, these skills might be(come) essential especially in that domain.<sup>15</sup>

## 7. Participation in Digital Music Cultural Worlds

Tia DeNora's (2000) reflections about music in everyday life are well known as well as her claim for a review of Adorno's music sociology (2003). In contemporary network societies, the digitally produced and distributed music cultural artefacts, even as the digitally exchanged (meta-)comments in the social networks, will certainly influence the everyday musical behavior of everybody participating in the contemporary music cultures in and out of school.<sup>16</sup> A timeline of technologies and its relations to the 'musicking humanity' has been recently presented by Evangelos Himonides (2012), beginning with the Neanderthal flute and ending, for the moment, with the manifold digital interconnected music technologies. Himonides emphasizes that "only humans can be critical about the effective use of

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Weiss Hanrahan (2013, 76).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Wallerstein's *Creation of a Geoculture* (2004, 65–67).

<sup>13</sup> Not further outlined in this contribution.

<sup>14</sup> An interesting proposition, made by Charles Soukup (2012), is to embrace of hyper-mediated everyday life as ethnographic flaneur.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. e.g. in the domain of art music Adam Harper's music system for the next millennium (Harper 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Technology in the lives and schools of adolescents* (Ruthmann und Dillon 2012).

these tools (452)". Thus again, pupils as (future) citizens should learn to critically engage in the effective use of digital interconnected music cultural technologies.

An overview about popular music and the world of musical flows<sup>17</sup> is given by Connell and Gibson (2003), who wrote about technological changes, mobility, and changing marketing strategies that lead to transnational soundscapes (160ff). Other authors wrote about ongoing processes of *mediatisation*. Friedrich Krotz (2009), for instance, defines the term 'mediatisation' as "the process whereby communication refers to media and uses [of] media that media in the long run increasingly become relevant to the social construction of everyday life, society, and culture as a whole (24)". Christoph Jacke (2008) observes two interdependent bidirectional processes. Into the one direction, he realizes the "*mediatisation* of the music". Vice versa, he recognizes the '*musicalisation* of media' (144–145). Thus, manifold possibilities of music cultural participation as production and listening require appropriate and multiple capacities to participate in a democratic reflective and critical way.

In urban as well as in non-metropolitan areas, Connell and Gibson (2003) observe "the rise of the home recording cultures" through cheaper and more accessible technologies and Internet resources (258). In their *manifesto for the digital revolution*, Kusek and Leonhard (2005) even consider the future of music in the hands of artists, because music is digitally "easier and cheaper to produce, record, edit, mix, duplicate, distribute, and promote (143)". On the other hand, the interplay between music, audience, and media listener – described by Patrick Wikström (2009) – might also lead to a threatening control of the listener (85–118). Thus, there appear simultaneous processes that promote heteronomy as well as autonomy as contexts for music cultural involvements and participation.

Paul Woodford (2005) defines "musical reflective thinking as a form of musical and social inquiry whereby individuals and groups construct a musical worldview and corresponding sense of musical identity (ix)." Thus, it should make sense to consider these emerged forms of digitally driven possibilities of music cultural participation in future music pedagogical reflections.

This does not mean we are to judge the multiplication of perhaps *ephemeral* music cultural worlds in a normative preventive way, but to provide the pupils with the capacity to reflect on the rapidly changing music cultural conditions and transformations in the Net and to develop the capacities to use media *musically* in a reflective and creative way.

## 8. Social Cultural Network and Informal Learning

In a more general way, Friesen and Hug even propose practices and institutions of education that work in a frame of reference that is "mediatic" (2009, 74). With the idea of engaging in a *mediatic* school environment to allow critical reflective music cultural participation, the music computer and the social (cultural) network appear as an appropriate toolkit in a music cultural pedagogy. An overview of *Music education with digital technology* is presented by Finney and Burnard (2007) with many examples of digital music in the classroom. Furthermore, considering the advantages of informal learning,<sup>18</sup> John Finney (2007) distinguishes, for instance, five locations of music education in *and out* of school with formal and informal<sup>19</sup> musical learning environments – all pervaded by ICT – (11) that might provide multiple connection points for advisable music educational concepts to involve the pupils into critical analysis and production of music cultural artefacts in the *mediatic* music classroom.

Three analytically distinguishable and empirically interwoven possibilities to use media musically in the Net shall serve as examples for the argumentation: (a) the generative practices of production and distribution; (b) the perceptive practices of choosing and listening; and (c) the verbal communicative (critical or reflexive) practices of commentating (posting). Furthermore, there is the possibility to (d) observe the development of these three practices (a to c) in the Net postings (artefacts, song lists and comments, profiles and timelines) by reflecting the generative, perceptive, and verbal communicative practices on a meta-level. In the classroom (as well as in society), all these practices (a-d) should be accompanied by critical and reflective thinking. Thus, the musically critical reflective thinking has to be trained in general school in the ongoing process of learning these practices of music cultural participation.

- (a) In the literature there are many practice examples how to generate (creative) music cultural artefacts in the classroom as, for instance, Göran Folkestad's (1996) and Bo Nilsson's (2002) rather early reports as well as more recent reports by Nick Breeze (2012) about *Composing with computers in English schools* and Brown/Dillon (2012) about *Collaborative digital media performance with generative music systems*. The latter

<sup>17</sup> Cf. again Arjun Appadurai (1996).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. informal learning practices in a democratic educational framework (Woodford 2005, 100).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Lucy Green (2008).

describes the strong connection of digital-music-making in school to informal learning (2012, 557) that connect the school music culture to the pupils' worlds.<sup>20</sup>

- (b) The choosing and the listening of music cultural artefacts are long discussed topics in mostly 'normative' concepts of music pedagogy. The Net provides the possibility for the learner's to look out for their own interests and to discover their own cultural images (cf. above). Furthermore, the decision whether to listen or to produce might be in the hands of the pupils taking into consideration their individual predispositions and faculties, by that, promoting informal learning process under democratic conditions.
- (c) Social media applications allow the users "publishing to a page, inserting textual statements about what one is doing, tracking and subscribing to other users' statements and allowing others to do the same, viewing and commenting on one's own or others' submissions, and symbolically indicating approval or appreciation of media by rating, reviews or other means, etc." (Lewis, Pea und Rosen 2010). Magenheim and Meister (2011) investigated social software and its general advantages to build up study groups, and to promote collaborative and informal learning in school. One important point is the possibility of engaging into democratic processes in the Net that might be much easier initiated than in the (mostly teacher-guided) collective classroom face-to-face-situation. In particular, the own (or collectively) generated and distributed music cultural artefacts should provide strong impulses for pupil-guided discussions about music in a concrete matter as well as about music culture as a whole.
- (d) The need to 'learn to learn' in ever-changing (post)modern societies implies the awareness of the own and collective diachronic (biographic) learning processes. Therefore, the social network provides different possibilities that should be investigated in further research. However, the processes of musical and about-musical communication and participation in the ephemeral, informational compressed and up-speeded music culture in the school Net as well as in the authentic global Net should provide possibilities to engage into more and more abstracted critical meta-reflections about music.

Certainly, there are many different possibilities to integrate the computer in music. Nevertheless, the presented proposition of pupils' participation at the authentic non-linear technological forms of music cultural life should provide them with individual and collective capacities to contest further challenges for participation in the digitally driven *musicoscapes*.

## 9. Conclusion and Outlook

Against this backdrop, it is argued for a music pedagogical move to digitally music production (editing, recording) and listening in combination with discursive social networking – without excluding conventional and unconventional forms of music making. Understood as general music cultural pedagogy for democratic participation, these processes should be accompanied by continuously critical reflection, that is, pupils' reflections about their doing in the (global) music media world, the teachers' reflections about the music cultural and educational processes in the social network (in the classroom), as well as – and mostly importantly – the collective reflections of coach and learners 'in' and 'about' the present and future music cultural networking world.

Understood as contribution to theory construction in music educational research, this rather cultural sociological view on critical music education should provide points of departure for further and various ideas about contemporary general music cultural education. However, the article is addressed to music education policy makers and researchers, to education administrators, to trainers and supervisors as well as to the teachers in the classroom. Policy makers and researchers are invited to contribute to a further developing of the presented thoughts by criticism and proliferation ideas. The administrators are invited to promote appropriate critical reflective music cultural participation in compulsory education by providing appropriate digital equipment in public and private classrooms. The trainers and supervisors are invited to immerse into the everyday digital music cultural worlds and to experiment new forms of music educational training together with their trainees. The teachers in the classroom are invited to discover new forms of music cultural teaching together with the pupils entrusted to their care.

After the discussion 'why' digital technologies emerge as important pedagogical tools for music teachers and the suggestion of four key points of music cultural practices, it might be an useful enhancement to give a hint 'how' teachers can really use digital technologies in the music classroom. Scott Watson (2011), for instance, presents a good deal of creativity-based projects to use technology in the secondary school from his own teaching experience (K-12). On the one hand, his philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings diverge from the presented ideas in this article by focusing creativity and the practical usefulness of music and technology. On the other side, his *Leitmotiv* of creativity

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the danger of students and teachers to stand on opposite music cultural sides (2010, 239).

leads to many projects that are congruent with the presented thoughts of critical education and music cultural engagement. Watson's many well explained projects and propositions to unlock musical creativity in the classroom shall not be repeated here. To cite as an example, Watson's first (of eight) principle(s), aims to allow students to share themselves. For this project, pupils are invited to string together short audio clips to a file called 'My Favorite Things Podcast' (26). Thus, by applying an obvious, simple, and workable idea of using everyday music media, the pupils participate with their own music cultural ideas in the secondary classroom and are encouraged to get aware of their own music cultural interests in regard to the interests of the others.

Even so, Watson's project ideas should contain useful and adaptable suggestions for primary school that cannot be unfolded within the scope of this theoretical contribution. To cite again one example, he proposes to let pupils (alone or in groups) create a sound score that accompanies a brief children's poem (195–197). As a matter of course, the use of music technologies should be well-considered in the primary school. Taken for granted that the children are used to digital music in their everyday world, a well-guided reflective interactive usage of music technologies in the classroom should provide more favorable experiences as the consumption of mono directional media (e.g. television or radio).

The need of interactive involvement in the primary school is articulated in the recent Advice of the French *Académie des sciences* (2013). The authors point out that the tablet computer with touchscreen might provide experiences of exploration and learning in the context of the sensomotoric development from children about two years old (21). They regard the primary school as starting point to engage into a systematic education of 'screens' (23). Assuming that, musicians, artists, teachers and researches are called upon to develop a broad range of special music education software for the primary school classroom that promotes an interactive critical reflective and musical engagement in democratic cultural net-worlds.

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