RAHMA, NABIL F. Ph.D. Extending Musical Horizons and Diversifying the Educational Visions: A Case Study Examining the Integration of Music Ensembles from Various Cultures in a School of Music in the United States. (2023)
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The purpose of this study was to investigate the integration of three music ensembles from various cultures in a School of Music in the Southeastern US: Indian, Old-Time, and Steelpan Ensembles. Through the lenses of social justice and multicultural music education, I aimed to gain insights into how these ensembles navigate the existing music education system at the collegiate level, exploring their strategies to challenge the status quo and foster success. Moreover, I focused on understanding the reasons that motivated students to participate in these ensembles and the benefits they gained from their experiences. The study took place during Spring 2023, with a total of ten participants, including three ensemble directors, two students from each ensemble, and one ethnomusicology professor. By adopting a qualitative case study methodology, I collected multiple forms of data, including individual and joint interviews, field notes from observation, and analysis of documents and learning materials. Findings suggested that these ensembles were unable to influence fundamental changes and challenge the dominance of the Eurocentric paradigm in terms of the School's policies and level of support. There were varied perspectives presented due to advantages or challenges arising from disparities in support among these ensembles, both among themselves and in comparison to other settings within the school. However, findings highlighted that there was indeed a positive, active, and encouraging transformation in the teaching and learning milieu taking place within the classrooms of these ensembles.

EXTENDING MUSICAL HORIZONS AND DIVERSIFYING EDUCATIONAL VISIONS: A

CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE INTEGRATION OF MUSIC ENSEMBLES FROM

VARIOUS CULTURES IN A SCHOOL OF MUSIC IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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Approved by

_____
Dr. Constance L. McKoy
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to the School of Music, my second home!

This dissertation written by Nabil F. Rahma has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Situating the Study

In the realm of advocating for social change in music education, the utilization of personal stories has become increasingly prevalent, as noted by Hess (2021). She emphasized that these stories serve as powerful tools for music educators and researchers to bring attention to critical issues, including the scarcity of resources, systemic injustices, the necessity for policy reform, and instances of marginalization and exclusion. Furthermore, it is essential for qualitative researchers to adopt a reflexive stance in their writing, acknowledging and examining their own biases, values, and experiences that may shape their qualitative research studies, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018).

To begin my research endeavor, I recognized the importance of reflecting on my positionality. This reflection relates to my transformative experience of being a music student and teacher from an Arabic country who moved to the US and became a student and a director of a Middle Eastern Music Ensemble at a University School of Music in the Southeastern United States (US). This transformative experience has driven the impetus for this study. Therefore, the following passage summarizes my personal story, interweaving the nuances of my music teaching and learning practice with the profound impact of working with a culturally diverse music ensemble in the US, inspiring the need for the research at hand.

I was born and raised in an Arabic country, where I earned a bachelor's degree in music arts with an emphasis on oud performance. My music background primarily reflects Arabic music traditions since my exposure to Western classical music remained at a surface level in my country. Additionally, I made several trips to various Arabic countries, actively participating in professional and community music activities, which were driven by my strong interest in

exploring diverse Arabic traditions and oud performance styles. These travels significantly enriched my teaching and learning experiences of a wide array of Arabic music styles. As a result, I got a teaching position at a music institute in my hometown, where I taught the oud and Arabic music theory, in addition to other undergraduate music courses, from 2011 to 2014.

Issues of diversity and inclusion in the tertiary music education system caught my attention when I moved to the US in 2015 and started looking for universities that could offer a master's degree in oud performance in the US. I soon discovered that most music performance programs across the US solely focus on Western classical music. Their audition and exam requirements were tailored exclusively to Western music instruments, theory, and history, with no consideration for Arabic instruments like the oud. Some of the critical feedback I received from my communications with music admission consultants at various universities highlighted the absence of courses related to Western instruments and the three major ensembles (i.e., orchestra, band, and choir) on my transcripts. They also noted that their programs did not offer instruction in oud performance. In my country, we do not have courses explicitly named "ensemble," "band," or "orchestra." Instead, our music institutes offer courses with concepts similar to small music ensembles, which were included in my transcripts, such as "Group Playing" and "Performance & Playing Collectively." These courses primarily aim to teach students how to play together and enhance their teamwork skills as a cohesive group.

Feeling excluded and marginalized as an Arabic musician within US music performance programs, I determined to find an alternative path. I turned my focus to music education programs that offered more flexibility in their admission policies and did not prioritize music performance as a requirement. However, my applications, including the one I submitted to my current University, were rejected as well. This time, the reasons for rejection were attributed to

the absence of music education courses on my transcripts and not having a music teaching certificate from the US. However, I did not give up! I reached out to the music education chair at my current University and met with her in person. I explained my experience as a teacher in my home country and provided proof of my qualifications. I am grateful for her understanding and support. My application was reconsidered by the music education faculty, and I was accepted into the master's program in music education in Fall 2016.

As a student, I did not encounter many challenges, thanks to the invaluable support of the music faculty and fellow classmates who enriched my learning experience. However, one notable issue was the lack of Arabic cultural representation in the School of Music, both in terms of demographics and curriculum. Throughout my master's and PhD studies, I was the only Arabic, Muslim student with an Arabic music background in all of my music courses. This lack of representation became particularly apparent when I compared it to my experiences in courses outside the School of Music, where I often found two or three fellow Arabic students, although they were not music majors. Recently, I became aware that two other Arabic students joined the School of Music, but their training and experience in Western classical music seemed to facilitate their admission. One of these students specifically joined the school because of the existence of the Middle Eastern Ensemble, as their parents had informed me. While it was encouraging to see a growing number of Arabic students in the School of Music, in my early years at the School, I felt a sense of loneliness in the classroom, particularly when discussions involved topics, terms, or jokes unfamiliar to me. However, I was fortunate to have professors and classmates who, in some instances, interrupted the conversation to provide explanations and put me in context.

When I began my master's studies, there were no Arabic music courses, or anything related to my music experience available in the music programs. This initially filled me with fear and stress regarding the continuation of my program, as adapting to a different educational system was quite challenging. There were many moments when I considered giving up. However, my strong desire to learn, coupled with my perseverance and the cultural responsiveness of my professors, helped me overcome these challenges as I progressed through my program. My professors not only recognized but also honored my Arabic music background, allowing me to integrate my knowledge of the oud and Arabic music into my class projects and assignments. For example, I had the incredible opportunity to write papers on Arabic music, develop teaching activities and strategies related to Arabic music, and even teach the oud to fellow students as part of various class projects. This nurturing environment not only facilitated my growth as an Arabic musician and educator but also transformed my perspective on the teacher-student dynamic across cultures. I came to understand the vital importance of being a culturally responsive teacher and tailoring my teaching mindset and disposition to honor and incorporate students' diverse backgrounds (McKoy & Lind, 2023).

During that time, I was struck by the contradictions that existed at the School of Music. On one hand, the music faculty demonstrated cultural responsiveness in their interactions, while on the other hand, the degree program requirements and admission policies, particularly in the music performance contexts, were not culturally responsive at the same level toward the diverse musical backgrounds of many students. These requirements and policies seemed to implicitly convey the message, "if you do not have a sufficient background in Western classical music, you should not apply to the School."

These observations raised questions in my mind about diversity and inclusion within music schools on a broader scale in the US. It prompted me to critically examine the admission procedures and school curricula, as well as the overarching issue of cultural representation within the music education system. I recognized the pressing need to address these concerns and create more opportunities for musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds to be both included and valued within music educational settings.

To my surprise and excitement, the School of Music established a Middle Eastern Ensemble course in Spring 2018 through a collaborative effort between Dr. John, an ethnomusicology professor, and a visiting ethnomusicology professor with extensive experience in Arabic music. This opportunity resonated strongly with my musical identity and heritage, fostering a deep sense of belonging and self-expression. Unfortunately, it coincided with my final semester in my master's program, so I could only take it once. Regrettably, the ensemble's existence was short-lived, as it was discontinued in Fall 2018 due to the departure of the visiting professor and my graduation in Spring 2018. I was left wondering why the School did not continue the ensemble or find an alternative instructor.

Despite being in the same city and holding a master's degree in music education from the US, which should have made me somehow a possible candidate, navigating the challenges of F1 visa regulations presented unexpected hurdles. However, I maintained contact with Dr. John and shared my plans to apply for the Ph.D. program in music education at the same School. He expressed enthusiasm and suggested that we could revive the Middle Eastern Ensemble project and work things out once I began the Ph.D. program. In the Spring of 2019, I received admission to the Ph.D. program in music education, and I was assigned the role of teaching the Middle Eastern Ensemble.

As a teacher, I encountered some challenges at the School of Music. As an F1 visa holder, my on-campus employment options were limited to assistantships such as Teaching Assistant (TA) or Graduate Assistant (GA), rather than being hired as an adjunct faculty member, for instance. These visa regulations within the educational system can potentially restrict schools' ability to diversify their music programs and bring in teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds. These regulations may also impact the overall teaching and learning experience in the classroom.

I initially began teaching the Middle Eastern Ensemble as a TA and was not able to be the instructor of record for the class at that time. Dr. John took that role. Later, with Dr. John's support, I was awarded a GA position that allowed me to serve as the instructor of record for the undergraduate students' section of the course, but I still couldn't be the instructor of record for the graduate students' section because "graduate students cannot teach graduate students." This policy created some challenges as it implicitly conveyed to some students that I did not have full control over class decisions because of my TA status in some semesters. For example, one student who disagreed with my decision once emailed me stating that they would address the issue with Dr. John "because he is the instructor of record."

Furthermore, adapting to a different teaching environment was highly rewarding, although it presented its own set of challenges. Teaching students in the US, who often had limited familiarity with Arabic music, musical system, and culture compared to my students back in my home country, required additional effort. Consequently, I had to dedicate extra time and attention to not only teaching melodies but also emphasizing broader musical concepts, including Arabic *Maqāmāt* (modes), Arabic *Īqāʿāt* (rhythmic patterns), *Taqāsīm* (instrumental form that includes improvisation), ornamentation techniques, ear training, Arabic singing techniques, basic

components of the Arabic language and terminology, as well as cultural and social contexts and other Arabic musical and performance aspects. Ensuring that students gained a holistic understanding of Arabic music styles and a genuine learning experience was crucial when I started the ensemble.

However, it was challenging to teach an ensemble that deviated from the Western classical music canon, which had long been the dominant tradition in the School. Many students had preconceived notions that "ensembles" should solely focus on performance, often overlooking the importance of broader musical knowledge. Their desires for grand concerts at the recital hall further complicated matters. As a result, I sometimes found myself caught between prioritizing performance skills and incorporating the desired musical knowledge. During certain semesters, I unintentionally replicated the power structure of the school norms by aligning the ensemble instruction with conventional practices. This meant emphasizing notation reading over oral learning, instrumental techniques over engagements with music, selecting challenging pieces, and adhering to school protocols regarding concerts (i.e., wearing formal black attire, performing at the recital hall, and avoiding interactions with the audience, whereas in Arabic music, audience engagement is an integral part of the performance). This unintentional shift sidelined the incorporation of comprehensive musical knowledge and cultural understanding that I had initially aimed for during those semesters. This experience prompted deep reflection and self-questioning about the purpose of the ensemble. Was it solely about playing music from sheet music without a deeper understanding of the music itself? If not, how could the Middle Eastern Ensemble offer diversity and unique benefits to the School and its students at large?

Amidst the instructional challenges that I have embraced as opportunities for growth, I began to notice that the level of support from the School varies between the Middle Eastern Ensemble and other Western classical music settings. One major concern is the lack of a designated official body under which the ensemble operates. This ambiguity hinders my ability to effectively address and fulfill the specific needs of the ensemble, leaving it somewhat marginalized. Whenever I encounter obstacles or have concerns regarding the ensemble, I always reach out to Dr. John and put an extra burden on his shoulders because he can facilitate effective communication with individuals who can offer further support. Although Dr. John might not be officially obligated to oversee all the aspects of the ensemble, his invaluable support and guidance have been crucial in addressing a wide range of issues, including official matters, resource acquisition, performance coordination, student concerns and conflicts, and advertisement and public relations. I sincerely appreciate his constant dedication and mentorship throughout my teaching and learning experience at the School, which helped me cope with many of these issues.

Furthermore, many of the larger Western orchestras and bands at the School have an official body that caters to their needs. The School invests significant resources, including funding and efforts, to support these large ensembles. The School consistently manages hiring procedures to fill any gaps, provides instruments and equipment, prioritizes these large ensembles in most music program curricula, schedules suitable rehearsal times, offers appropriate rehearsal spaces, and provides extensive advertising and performance opportunities. These concerted efforts are all great in enhancing the experience for these large ensembles and creating a supportive and enriching environment for students. However, this comprehensive

support system gives privilege to these large ensembles over other small or newly established ensembles, especially music ensembles that do not operate within the Western music canon.

One the other hand, I realized how the variation in support could impact the instruction in the Middle Eastern Ensemble. Placing the ensemble as an elective and not including it within the core courses of most music programs led some students to prioritize their other degree requirements, often regarding the ensemble as a "secondary" commitment. Besides the ensemble's position in the curriculum, our rehearsal space, a small classroom with poor acoustics, requires constant rearranging of tables and chairs, wasting precious rehearsal time and effort. When COVID-19 hit and all large Western ensembles stopped their operations, we were able to obtain a larger, more suitable rehearsal space. However, after COVID-19, we returned to the small classroom. In certain instances, students would choose to remain seated at the tables, choosing to play without rearranging the setup due to fatigue upon their arrival. We meet once a week for two hours from 5 to 7 pm. Scheduling rehearsals at 5 pm, after a long day of work and classes, led to some exhausted and unfocused students, some of whom even left in the middle of the class, without permission, arrived late, or did not show up. When I applied a more rigorous attendance policy to control the rehearsal, some students started to criticize the grading system unfairly. Besides family circumstances and sickness, students who did not demonstrate a commitment to rehearsals and class expectations often cited other reasons such as the heavy load of credit hours required for their degree, the class being an elective and not part of their degree requirements, daytime classes schedules, assignments of other classes, and participation in other recitals and gigs as excuses. However, these same students still demanded a big concert at the end of the semester, despite their low commitment and proficiency in Arabic music, which sometimes led to misrepresentations of the music on stage.

When I reflected on these comments and considered why some students reacted to the ensemble in this manner, I recognized that a significant part of these reactions was influenced by the School structure that reinforces certain assumptions of musical superiority and inferiority. I had come to recognize by the end of Fall 2022 that such marginalization of the ensemble occurred in the School structure and had somehow led numerous students to perceive the ensemble as "inferior" and less important compared to other offerings within the School. For instance, in orchestra settings, students tend to have higher expectations and typically show more respect to the conductor, come prepared with their music, refrain from entering and exiting rehearsals at will, and avoid playing out of tune or deviating from the expected performance style on stage. Furthermore, I found that my "hands were tied" due to the assumption that a one-credit hour course does not require work or preparation outside of class. This limitation prevented me from assigning extra work or creating additional assignments to encourage some students to commit to rehearsals. This low level of commitment from some students occasionally resulted in stressful rehearsals, as it was unfair to those who had prepared for class. We had to cut some rehearsals to practice the music during class time with those who had not prepared, which led to frustration among the prepared students. I want to clarify that although I had some students who gave less value to the ensemble, a greater number of my students demonstrated incredible dedication and commitment to the ensemble and made significant contributions to its growth. Many of them chose to participate in the ensemble for several semesters, recognizing the development of their musical skills, cultural understanding, and the value they gained from their continued involvement.

Additionally, the way in which the ensemble was initially established continues to influence its growth and sustainability. It began with temporary instructors, including the visiting

ethnomusicologist and myself as a TA/GA. The School initially provided two ouds for instruction, which was greatly appreciated. However, there was limited ongoing investment in instructional resources and instruments. Consequently, the ensemble's inception resembled an attempt to construct a building without long-term blueprints, essential construction materials, or a solid foundation. This situation raised concerns about the potential instability and fragility of the ensemble, akin to a building that could collapse before it even fully takes shape.

The lack of learning resources and notation for Arabic music has placed the burden on me to create and translate materials individually during breaks between each semester, especially because I have returning students, and I introduce new repertoire each semester. I also provide individual sessions for some beginner students outside of class time to ensure that they can catch up and do not feel excluded or marginalized during rehearsals, especially considering that the ensemble comprises both beginners and advanced performers. Hence, the time and effort I invest outside of teaching hours are not adequately compensated, particularly since the class is only one credit hour. The scarcity of Arabic musical instruments at the School also has compelled me to utilize my personal instruments, allow students to use any instruments and adapt them even if they are not part of the tradition, such as Western wind instruments, as well as rely on borrowed percussion instruments from the percussion studio, to ensure its growth while I am teaching. My hesitance to request instruments for the ensemble stems from uncertainty regarding its continuity after my departure. As I have one semester left in my Ph.D. program, it remains unclear if the ensemble will be sustained. Consequently, when discussing instrument concerns, the question arises as to why the School should invest in instruments that may not be used in the future. This raises additional crucial questions: Should the Middle Eastern Ensemble be discontinued once the current teacher leaves? Would it not be more beneficial for the School to seek another

11

qualified teacher who can continue teaching the ensemble and enriching the diversity of offerings? Why does the administration promptly seek a replacement director for Western orchestras or Western instrument instructors when they leave the School, instead of considering program cuts, while the Middle Eastern Ensemble still faces uncertainty about its continuity? How well do all of these practices and the other mentioned above align with the School's mission that "aspires to engage with the diversity of musical meanings and practices both globally and locally," going beyond mere tokenism? Regardless of whether it is recognized or not, these aforementioned policies, practices, and decisions represent enduring manifestations of "White supremacy" and "institutional racism" that still persist even in 2023. Therefore, addressing these issues is imperative for fostering greater inclusivity and equity.

During discussions with Dr. John, he often reminded me that "you are not alone" in facing these challenges within the Middle Eastern Ensemble. He suggested I read Ted Solís's book, "*Performing Ethnomusicology*" (2004), which revealed that the issues I encountered have persisted for decades and are not unique to me. Inspired by the idea that "I am not alone" and motivated to drive positive change, I shifted my dissertation research in late 2022. I decided to explore the experiences of music ensembles from diverse cultures within the School of Music, including the Indian, Old-Time, and Steelpan Ensembles. These ensembles, along with the Middle Eastern Ensemble, were collectively referred to as the "Other Four Ensembles" due to their unique music styles and distinct teaching and learning approaches compared to Western settings. They were previously categorized as "eclectic" in the music education curriculum and labeled in various ways within the School of Music community, such as world, non-Western, oral, or ethnic music ensembles. I have reservations about such labels as they can isolate these ensembles and emphasize Othering rather than promoting inclusivity. Grouping them together

made me realize that their directors may share similar situations as me and have valuable experience in dealing with them so that their collective wisdom could enhance my own instruction and practices. My involvement as a student in the Indian and Old-Time Ensembles during my Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Ethnomusicology studies in Spring 2020, as well as my collaboration with ensemble directors as a teacher, highlighted the significant benefits these ensembles bring to the School of Music. These experiences, along with positive interactions with ensemble directors, solidified my belief that investigating these ensembles is not only worthwhile but essential for enhancing our educational practices and fostering diversity, inclusivity, and equity.

Through sharing my personal story, I aimed to present a compelling argument highlighting the importance of giving equitable treatment, value, support, and recognition to musics, students, teachers, and ensembles representing various cultural traditions, alongside those rooted in the Western music canon. It is crucial to emphasize that my intention from this research is not to criticize the School of Music, Western music teachers or ensembles, or other Western music settings. Instead, my goal was to bring awareness to some weaknesses and practices in the School structure that might unintentionally reinscribe some prevailing assumptions, cultural biases, and power structures that still impact the broader music education system in the US. This could be particularly relevant as we currently function under new leadership at the School of Music that showed interest in increasing awareness of these ensembles and making shifts within the School at large. By engaging in open discussions about diverse musical traditions at the School of Music through the lenses of social justice and multicultural music education, we can significantly contribute to a broader understanding of their

music and cultural significance that, in turn, would foster more cultural appreciation and inclusivity for everyone.

Background of Problem

Most music schools in the US function primarily under a Eurocentric music paradigm, which heavily reflects the Western European classical music canon. This dominant paradigm has become questionable and is under critique because it raises issues of social justice that are grounded in most aspects of the music education system in the US (Bradley, 2015; Gustafson 2009; Hess, 2017; Robinson, 2019). Systemic oppression, institutional racism, and exclusion of teachers and students of minoritized groups from schools of music have had a deep-rooted history in music education in the US, and as Hess (2017) emphasizes, "music education is steeped in whiteness" (p. 25). Gustafson (2009) addresses issues of power, racism, and Western hegemony and provided a comprehensive historical exploration of racism in music schools at all levels (i.e., primary to post-secondary) in the US for a period about a hundred years ago. Many music researchers find that the music education system in the US still functions primarily through the ideologies of White supremacy, color blindness, and social and racial discrimination, and regrettably, many music teachers at music schools reinscribe these ideologies through their practices, which might be intentional or due to their ignorance (Bradley, 2015; Hess, 2017; Marx, 2006; Robinson, 2019).

According to Palmer (2018), social justice concerns within music education have adverse effects on numerous dimensions of music schools. These impacts manifest in areas such as music school structure, curricula, and funding; student academic performance disparities, future prospects, and participation rates; instances of social and racial discrimination, and the sense of exclusion felt by students and parents. Additionally, the impacts extend to school administrators

and teachers hiring, turnover, and retention rates (Palmer, 2018). Therefore, issues of social justice construct critical matters among music educators and music students who demand change (Bradley, 2015; Hess, 2017; Palmer, 2018; Robinson, 2019).

Due to the rising number of immigrants and shifts in US demographics, the issue of music diversity has become a prominent concern within music schools. League and Shelemay (2021) indicated that the substantial and ongoing waves of transnational migration, starting from the mid-20th century, encompassing both voluntary and forced movements from various regions beyond Europe, have transformed the US into a remarkably diverse musical landscape and influenced the formation of a new, transnational musical scene. They added that as migrant communities establish deeper roots and consolidate their societal, cultural, and political influence within the US, they play a central role in discussions about race, ethnicity, and cultural dynamics on a national scale; thus, musical practices are intricately woven into these processes, often taking on novel significance when adapted to meet the needs of migrant musicians and audiences. Although the growing musical diversity in the US has coincided with the development of music scholarship, it is only recently that musical diversity has captured scholarly attention (League & Shelemay, 2021). By emphasizing a music curriculum that fosters only Western classical music performance, reading notation, restricted audition requirements, and does not integrate various music styles and teaching strategies, music educators maintain the dominant paradigm and cannot reach an effective transformation in the music education system that reflects inclusivity, diversity, and equity (Bradley, 2015; Hess, 2017; Robinson, 2019).

Furthermore, Campbell (2016) explained how the lack of diversity in music curricula is associated with social justice and how music educators are not doing well in this regard:

15

Calls for social justice in higher education have been variously met by pronouncements from presidents and provosts, and by innovative redesigns of programs in departments of the humanities, the arts, the sciences, and the social sciences. Music faculties in North America are found dragging their feet, doing much less in the way of diversifying studies, mainly concerning themselves with conserving and preserving Western European classical music. Adding a dash of this and a dose of that are superficial excursions to the music of "other lands," which preserve and thus privilege 19th-century European works and pedagogical processes. (p. 31-32)

Hence, Campbell, Myers, & Sarath, (2016) mentioned that most music schools at higher education are resistant, staying isolated, and too frequently, regressive instead of progressive in their approach to undergraduate music curricula. Campbell (2016) argued that diversifying music curricula is considered a key to understanding music and human learning locally and across the globe because fully embedded diversity within music practices would reflect a global phenomenon, a pan-human need, and a universally vital component of cultural identity as it is artistically represented. Therefore, the Taskforce of the College Music Society issued a Manifesto in 2014, calling for urgent and progressive changes in undergraduate music program curricula (Campbell et al., 2016). They reflected on the prevailing discourse concerning shifts in music programs at the collegiate level towards new perspectives. The Taskforce drew ideas from the lenses of creativity, diversity, and integration to develop new visions of music curricula, especially since they considered music schools to be at a critical moment for specifying what professional musicians and teachers need to survive and thrive in their future profession. However, Bradley (2017) emphasized the slow progress and persistent challenge of implementing meaningful changes in the music education curriculum, despite multiple efforts:

Within the discipline of music teacher education, calls for reforms to diversify the

curriculum date back to the early 1900s but became more urgent during the Tanglewood

Symposium of 1967, which advocated the incorporation of a greater diversity of musical

styles, past and present. Although some small changes to public school music curricula

resulted from Tanglewood, the Vision 20/20 symposium of 1999 reiterated the need to

motivate the discipline toward action, in recognition of the lack of substantive reforms to

date. Although by the 1990s "the study of multicultural music had become a curricular

norm," and technological advances had begun to affect teachers' work significantly, few

of these changes were represented meaningfully in music teacher education programs.

The need for MENC (the Music Educators National Conference) to undertake the 20/20

symposium was inspired by exactly the same circumstances as the Tanglewood

Symposium (Mark 2000, 28). That the CMS [the College Music Society] task force has

now issued a call for curricular change sixteen years after Vision 20/20 illustrates the

continuing lack of substantive changes to music education curricula (p. 207).

In this context, numerous music schools in the US have been trying to incorporate music

instruction in their curricula that embrace inclusion, diversity, and multicultural perspectives.

Many institutions have introduced music instruction from various cultures into their course

content, encompassing areas such as music theory and history, and have introduced new courses

focused on world music or specific musical cultures (Anderson & Campbell, 2010; Campbell et

al., 2016; Volk, 1998). Furthermore, efforts to enhance diversity, inclusion, and cultural

representation have been made by establishing ensembles dedicated to music traditions from

diverse cultures beyond Western European music canon within music schools (Boyce, 2015;

Sarath et al., 2016; Solís, 2004; Volk, 1998). Nevertheless, the integration of music ensembles

from different cultures raises significant questions about the challenges educators must address

to achieve successful, suitable, and sustainable implementation and bring actual benefits of such

integration (Biernoff & Blom, 2002; Boyce, 2015, 2017; Morford, 2007; Solís, 2004). While

acknowledging the importance of such initiatives, Bradley (2017) considered these steps to be

only initial measures and do not actually make fundamental shifts in the music school systems in

higher education:

> Single-course additions rarely challenge a dominant ideology of [W]hiteness. Music
>
> education cannot become more socially just until it becomes more inclusive of
>
> diversity—and this means diversity of musics, peoples, voices, values, and more. My
>
> goal is not to dismiss the European musical canon but to decenter it. Music teacher
>
> education must move beyond methodolatry and token multicultural courses. When
>
> students explore the ways that musicking of all kinds contributes to human life, within a
>
> curriculum aimed at challenging dominant ideologies, they begin to recognize the cultural
>
> amnesia of [W]hiteness hiding within the enormous shadow cast by Mozart and other
>
> masters of the European canon… Developing truly appropriate pedagogies and
>
> curriculum for the twenty-first century suggests more than changes in coursework or the
>
> inclusion of a few more genres of music. While I agree that such changes are crucial to
>
> education for the present and the future, in my argument these represent only first steps,
>
> not ultimate solutions (p. 211).

Therefore, Bradley (2017) put emphasis on the necessity of curriculum reform in music

teacher education within public and private universities through a social justice and antiracism

lens by examining historical and current barriers specific to music education in higher

institutions that are stemming from a culture of Whiteness. This, in return, enables music

educators to engage in critical reflection regarding the "undesirable" elements of their existing musical and instructional practices and to acknowledge the possibility of these practices to "miseducate—even to dehumanize" (Bradley, 2017, p. 218). Hence, Bradley (2011) clarified,

White-supremacist thinking is not about overt racial prejudice but the systems and structures that subtly produce and reproduce advantage and the invisible norm for Whites within the social order... Although the term antiracism appears to suggest a focus solely on inequities of skin color or ethnicity, antiracism in education seeks to disrupt power relations inherent in all forms of inequity (p. 80).

Hess (2017) supported Bradley's arguments and stressed that signifying systemic issues is an essential step toward shifting power dynamics and oppressive behaviors and said, "music education must play a role in identifying and combatting the systems that marginalize specific populations" (p. 21). Hess (2017) further stated,

Acting begins with naming—with identifying systems clearly and then moving to dismantle them. As a discipline, if we are genuinely interested in what we call diversity, we must foreground issues of race, [W]hiteness, and power, and then act accordingly... Breaking the silence about race and being explicit about our language (instead of masking our language in euphemisms) is crucial for addressing systemic inequities (p. 25).

However, Kajikawa and HoSang (2021) explained that music scholars might find themselves hesitant when addressing political topics, as the norms in both political science and music often emphasize the separation between the two realms. Thus, discussions on policies and policy debate might seem unrelated to the artistic and aesthetic expressions and practices of musicians for some educators (Kajikawa & HoSang, 2021; Kingsbury, 2001). However, engaging in

political topics associated with music can give an opportunity to comprehend music's significant role in political dynamics, acknowledging how musical engagement influences society and cultures; which in turn could promote music programs' specialized knowledge with fresh significance while also challenging conventional frameworks and norms that often sideline music and cultural production from meaningful exploration and analysis (Kajikawa & HoSang, 2021; Hill 2009). Therefore, Hess (2019) encouraged music educators and students to become collaborative activist-musicians to develop the potential of music to foster connections with others, tell stories and share experiences, and engage together politically to facilitate change.

While the integration of music ensembles from various cultures within the School of Music appears to be a positive step toward change, the school's fundamental operational framework remains significantly influenced by the Western classical music canon. This influence could potentially hinder the seamless integration of music ensembles form various cultures within the School, causing potential challenges in achieving equitable treatment for everyone and productive coexistence. Furthermore, I contend that despite the entrenched historical origins of social justice challenges within music education, which may appear resistant to transformation or reform, it remains within our capacity to effect change and establish a more equitable music education framework. This can be achieved by openly sharing our individual encounters with inequities, explicitly outlining and characterizing systemic and prevailing practices within the School structure, and ultimately, by demonstrating our dedication to initiate action and advocate for transformative change that reflects genuine diversity, inclusivity, and equity.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the integration of music ensembles from various cultures in a School of Music in the US. Specifically, I aimed to learn about the

20

experiences of music instructors and students who participate in three ensembles of traditions different from the prevalent Western classical ensembles in the Schools of Music: Indian Ensemble, Old-Time Ensemble, and Steelpan Ensemble. Through the lenses of social justice and multicultural music education, I sought to gain insights into how these ensembles navigate the existing music education system at the collegiate level, exploring the strategies employed by directors to challenge the status quo and foster success. Additionally, I aimed to understand the motivations that encourage students to participate in these ensembles and the benefits they achieve from such experiences.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the role and experiences of music ensembles that deviate from the Western classical music canon in music schools at tertiary levels could be a positive step toward transforming music education systems. By highlighting the contributions of these ensembles and exploring the perspectives of their members, awareness and advocacy for their importance in promoting inclusion, diversity, equity, and cultural competence within music schools can be increased. Sharing these experiences can benefit music scholars, ensemble directors, and institutions seeking to enhance their practices and incorporate more musics from diverse cultures into their programs. Furthermore, gaining insights into instructional objectives, implementations, and challenges can inform music educators on how to better engage students, foster motivation, and develop broader musical skills in diverse instructional settings.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research and issue questions. The four research questions are numbered, and the issue questions are provided below each research question to

assist in providing further clarification. The first three questions were intended to learn about the instructors' experiences, while the fourth question targeted students' experiences.

1. How can the integration of music ensembles from various cultures challenge the dominance of the Eurocentric paradigm of music schools in the US?

    a. Why should music schools in the US incorporate music ensembles from various cultures? Why this integration is important and how can it be advantageous?

    b. How does the music school structure challenge the integration of these ensembles?

2. How are the instructional objectives applied by the ensemble instructors different from the common music instruction and practice within Western classical music ensembles?

3. How do ensemble instructors deal with educational challenges within these ensembles?

    a. How do ensemble directors create instructional objectives that meet all student needs, especially if students are of various musical skills and backgrounds?

    b. Why expectations for public performance might impact instructional practices within these ensembles?

4. Why are students motivated to participate in these types of ensembles?

    a. How do students' musical backgrounds and culture align or conflict with the instructional methods used in these ensembles?

    b. Why/ or how do students value their participation in these ensembles?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The main purpose of the literature review was to lay the groundwork for exploring the extent of transformation within the School of Music structure in comparison with the prevailing music school system in the US throughout its history. I have come to realize that the issue does not lie solely within Western classical music itself; it is undoubtedly a great form of music. Thus, the aim of this review was not to diminish the value of Western music as a musical genre and cultural expression. What held greater importance in this discussion was the need to reflect on and recognize how, throughout history, this type of music has been utilized as a vehicle for colonization, perpetuating notions of White supremacy, systemic oppression, and institutional racism.

Exploring the Manifestations of "Whiteness" in the Context of Music Schools in the US Tracing the Roots of White Supremacy and Music Education Disparities

The current music education system in the US music schools operates within an ideology rooted in "White supremacy," a perspective deeply ingrained in the history of this field (Gustafson, 2009; Hess, 2015, 2017; Koza, 2008). Okun (2019) stated,

> White supremacy culture is the idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Colour and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. White supremacy expresses itself interpersonally as well as structurally [through our governments, education systems, food systems, etc.] (p.7).

Okun (2019) pointed out that several characteristics of White supremacy culture can manifest in the attitudes and behaviors of any group or organization, whether it is White-led, predominantly White, People of Color-led, or predominantly People of Color. Some of these characteristics include a perfectionist culture, worship of the written word, insistence on only one right way to

23

do things, power hoarding, defensiveness, a right to comfort, and fear of open conflict, among others (see Okun, 2019). In music contexts, White supremacy and its characteristics have perpetuated throughout history the assumption that Western classical music and its culture hold the highest "superiority" over other musical forms and cultures around the world. This assumption significantly impacts the selection of music that should be taught and studied within music schools, as well as the attitudes and behaviors of stakeholders.

Campbell (2018) and Kajikawa (2019) demonstrated how music schools in the US cultivated and glorified Western art music over history while forbidding and underestimating other types of music. Campbell (2018) indicated that secondary schools saw the emergence of school choirs, bands, and orchestras during the late 1800s, and these musical experiences were developed with the intention of providing aesthetic and expressive education for young students to engage with the musical works of Western composers such as Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, and Mendelssohn. Kajikawa (2019) indicated that university music schools were originally designed to teach classical music and catered to White Anglo-Saxon elites' tastes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and music schools were founded on principles of exclusion, reflecting the preferences of White Anglo-Saxon elites who believed in the superiority of European art music over other musics, particularly those associated with marginalized groups. While musics of other cultures began to emerge early in the 20th century, Western art music remained the focal point at most music schools despite emerging original expressive forms in various communities around the US that have had influential music such as blues and jazz (Campbell, 2018).

Kajikawa (2019) indicated that as mass immigration and internal migration threatened established norms, cultural elites sought to maintain Anglo-Saxon dominance by favoring European art music, and this cultural gerrymandering aimed to uphold Anglo-Saxon hegemony

24

in response to concerns about the racial integrity of the US; thus, European composers' works were considered the pinnacle of "civilization," shaping Western classical music as part of a "high art" culture distinct from popular entertainment like jazz and dance music. Campbell (2018) also said, "[f]olk music of a variety of origins was understood as interesting but not fully appropriate for the enlightenment of young people as expressions of high culture" (p.32). Therefore, musics of communities such as African American, Latin American, and Native American were often excluded from school curricula. Some of these forms of music were labeled inaccurately in several ways such as "folk music," "cheap, "vulgar," "primitive," "slave hymns," or "immoral," and were deemed unfit for curricular inclusion due to misconceptions about their "sophistication" compared to Western art music (see Campbell, 2018, p. 30-31).

Levine (1988) explained that adjectival categories, originating from phrenological concepts in the late nineteenth century, were established to classify various cultural types and assess racial types and intelligence based on cranial measurements. The terms "highbrow" and "lowbrow" were coined during that era, with "highbrow" initially signifying intellectual or aesthetic superiority in the 1880s, and "lowbrow" emerging shortly after 1900 to denote someone or something lacking in intellectual or aesthetic refinement. Kajikawa (2019) added that aesthetic qualities valued in symphonic music were deemed absent in the music of more "primitive" groups, guided by contemporary racial science. Kajikawa also explained that terms like "highbrow" and "lowbrow" were derived from phrenology's discriminatory ideas and integrated into music, illustrating the co-productive relationship between classical music and Whiteness, and both reinforced each other by opposing undesirable racial, ethnic, and class groups. Campbell (2018) additionally mentioned that Jazz and related styles were also banned due to concerns about their association with immoral venues, and Gospel music was considered too

religious for school, while European compositions like Bach's sacred cantatas found acceptance. Thus, the exclusion of diverse musical forms persisted even when jazz was allowed as an extracurricular activity in the 1950s, referred to as "dance bands" rather than as valuable musical expressions.

In this regard, Nettl (1995) presented an age-old yet still valid argument on how music institutions in the US may carry titles such as "School of Music" or "Department of Music," but their primary focus is evidently not on encompassing the study, advocacy, and representation of all musical traditions; instead, they are notably "schools of Western European art music" (p. 82). Kajikawa (2019), in alignment with Nettl, contended that this commitment to the classical repertoire is so ingrained that it is accepted as the norm, even without explicit qualifiers in college brochures, and this emphasis on White European and American male composers is rarely questioned, avoiding scrutiny through colorblind language making the privileged status quo of classical music deeply rooted in music institutions.

One of the issues inherent in the most prevailing music curricular endeavor is its explicit intent to promote hegemony by creating a path towards developing the "sophisticated" listeners, performers, and/or musicians rooted in the Eurocentric music canon. This involves privileging Eurocentric music content and perpetuating notions of White supremacy associated with "sophisticated" Western classical music (Gustafson, 2009; Hess, 2017). Even when courses focusing on alternative repertoires from diverse cultures are provided, there is often an underlying assumption that they do not possess the same level of "sophistication" and artistic value as the Western classical tradition (Talty, 2017). Such assumption could potentially cause certain students to perceive musics in ensembles featuring diverse cultural styles as less valuable compared to Western music. Consequently, they might prioritize courses related to Western

classical music, such as band, orchestra, and choir, while overlooking the offerings of these diverse ensembles. By steadfastly adhering to ideology such as "high art" "sophisticated music" in music education, music educators inadvertently or intentionally prioritize White individuals and Western music over Others, both in systemic and structural ways, which in various aspects, the prevailing system mirrors hierarchical class and race relations, perpetuating the pervasive ideology of White supremacy (Hess, 2015, 2017, 2021; Koza, 2008).

This matter in music education is not distinct from the broader educational system in the US, which has a lengthy history of upholding White supremacy and exclusion of Others. Throughout US history, education and knowledge have been constructed to align with White ideological agendas and have been presented as technical challenges of "excellence" rather than avenues for addressing social class or racial issues (Zinn, 2013). Throughout numerous years, education in the US has adopted exclusionary practices and was a privilege for White, wealthy men, while Other groups were denied access to education based on their gender, race/ ethnicity, and social class. A notable instance is the prohibition of women from higher education until the 1800s, and their subsequent struggles to gain entry into all-male professional schools and disciplines (Zinn, 2013). In the early twentieth century, public education for all students only covered elementary grades, and high schools were primarily attended by urban middle-class White students (Campbell, 2018). Adding to this, the prevalence of a segregated school system until the middle of twentieth century, with segregation occurring along the lines of either gender or racial groups (Gustafson, 2009; Zinn, 2013). That segregation policy continues to have implicit impacts even in the present day because racial segregation led many children of color during the early twentieth century to attend public schools without formal music programs or instrumental music options (Campbell, 2018). However, due to laws prohibiting Black students

from enrolling in White music schools or even attending musical events in White communities in certain cities, several professional Black musicians established music schools and programs, particularly in large cities, to serve the needs of Black students in the early twentieth century (Southern, 1997). This sort of racial segregation policy and limited opportunities for Black students contributed significantly to the prevailing demographic of music education today that predominantly reflects White individuals.

Furthermore, education for marginalized groups was for preparing "the literate labor force of the new industrial age," cultivating the notion of "obedience to authority," and promoting cultural assimilation, in which the education system was "slowly transforming the child from a little savage into a creature of law and order, fit for the life of civilized society" (as cited in Zinn, 2013, p. 263). If we reflect on the prevailing dynamics within most Western orchestras and bands, a similar perspective and a notable absence of democracy become apparent. These environments often cultivate obedience to authority, as described by Kingsbury (2001) who characterized orchestra conductors' actions as that of an "authoritarian martinet" (p.50). In these settings, students are expected to follow instructions without negotiation, hierarchies are established, and there is an emphasis on assimilation into the perceived "sophisticated" Western music culture and pursuit of "excellence" (see Hill, 2009; Kingsbury, 2001). Hence, students are not only taught musical skills but are also guided towards conformity and alignment with established norms. As someone observing the US from an external perspective, I have often pondered how some Western music settings, such as orchestra, manage to foster hierarchies and social/ racial dynamics that seemingly diverge from the principles of a democratic society, not only in teaching approaches, but also in terms of diversity (see DeLorenzo, 2012; Hess 2017; Hill 2009; Powell, 2011).

Formal vs. Informal Music Learning: A Paradigm Shift

The teaching approaches commonly used in band and orchestra settings were established as the norm within "formal music learning". Formal music learning is characterized by its predetermined, specified, and structured nature, reflecting a teacher-centered approach. This type of learning predominantly occurs within formal institutional settings like schools, universities, and conservatories (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2016; Wright, 2016). Learning materials and sequences of activities are arranged beforehand and primarily organized by the teacher, without involvement from learners. The teacher "owns" the decisions of the activities and determines what to learn and how to play, as in a teacher-centered perspective the teacher is considered the bearer of knowledge and the most authoritative figure in the classroom (Folkestad, 2006; Hill, 2009; Green, 2016; Powell, 2011). Learning style within formal/ Western ensemble settings is mainly based on reading sheet music and teacher conducting. Thus, this approach is mostly static and often limits students to one narrow direction, particularly when focused on Western classical music, restricting exposure to diverse musical styles and broader aspects of social and cultural contexts (Folkestad, 2006; Hill, 2009; Green, 2016; Powell, 2011).

One of the significant benefits of the integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures into music schools is that they honor and promote the oral tradition of music learning (Boyce, 2015; Pertl, 2017; Powell, 2011; Schippers, 2010; Solís, 2004; Talty, 2017). McKoy and Lind (2023) stated,

> Considering that oral transmission of music, and playing "by ear," is the typical mode of music-making across cultures and centuries, and that it is the way in which our initial engagement with music occurs, aural learning as a viable option for learners in music takes on a greater significance (p.48).

Embracing aural learning not only aligns with effective educational strategies but also honors the diverse musical experiences that students bring to the classroom (Folkestad, 2006; McKoy & Lind, 2023; Powell, 2011). Such advantages highlight the importance of fostering and expanding the integration of these types of ensembles in music schools.

Although some ensembles from diverse cultures might have some formal elements in their instruction, the oral teaching and learning approaches occur within most of these types of ensembles embrace concepts of "informal music learning," (Boyce, 2015; Pertl, 2017; Powell, 2011; Solís, 2004; Talty, 2017). Informal learning reflects a student-centered perspective and a social constructivist approach to teaching and learning music. It honors students' ownership of their learning and encompasses open and self-regulated practices that correspond to the means of everyday music learning outside of school (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2016; Powell, 2011). Informal learning embraces various musical behaviors and practices that require different ways of thinking about instructional approaches and music. For instance, students might interact differently with music learned by ear or through imitation, engaging more deeply with the music rather than merely "picking" notes from a sheet of music (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2016).

Green (2016) illustrated how informal learning can enhance students' musical, social, leadership, creative, and artistic skills, drawing parallels with how popular musicians learn music. The social interaction among participants in this style of learning takes various forms, leading to integrated learning on a holistic level. Consequently, informal learning is regarded as a social and cultural practice (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2016; Powell, 2011). Informal learning often occurs within friendship groups, promoting social skills and genuine interaction. Skills and knowledge are acquired and developed based on individual needs, often through peer teaching (Green, 2016; Schippers, 2010; Powell, 2011). Decision-making within the informal learning

process rests with students. They can have input into the music they will play and can choose how they want to learn and master it—whether through playing by ear, imitation, listening to and emulating recordings, or jamming together—rather than being confined to reading notation. Students can also discuss various topics related to the social and cultural aspects of the music and negotiate the procedures with the instructor (Boyce, 2015; Hess, 2019; Pertl, 2017; Powell, 2011; Green, 2016). Additionally, creativity is central to informal learning, as it integrates various aspects of music, including performing, composing, improvising, and listening, in imaginative ways (Green, 2016; Schippers, 2010). Incorporating informal music learning practices into the classroom could cultivate higher levels of enthusiasm and commitment to music, enhance motivation, and equip students with a diverse set of musical skills that may have been omitted from music school curricula (Green, 2016; Powell, 2011; Wright, 2016).

Therefore, exposing students to diverse cultural music ensembles would significantly enrich their musicianship initiative and foster a sense of multi-musicality (Le, 2022; Pertl, 2017; Powell, 2011; Talty, 2017). By engaging students in immersive and collaborative aural pedagogies of these types of ensembles, they can develop enhanced rhythmic depth, a deeper grasp of melody, a creative engagement with music, higher leadership skills, and more cohesive ensemble playing, as well as a more understating of social and cultural contexts of the music they play (Boyce, 2015; Le, 2022; Pertl, 2017; Powell, 2011; Schippers, 2010). This growth is cultivated within a culture that not only encourages musical exploration but also grants students the freedom to venture into such explorations (Boyce, 2015; Powell, 2011; Pertl, 2017). Overall, informal music learning is a more democratic education, providing students with an open space to share their opinions, negotiate issues, and choose their own paths of learning and engagement

31

with music (see Hess, 2017; Powell, 2011). I can see how this model is more reflective of a democratic society.

The assumptions of sophistication and excellence within Western classical music culture, as reflected through formal music learning, cultivate a culture of "perfectionism" and "competitiveness" at music schools. In informal music learning contexts, both the teacher and the students share a vision that centers on collaborative music-making and playing together, in which the emphasis is on the learning process itself rather than solely on the final performance. In contrast, within formal music learning settings, both students and teachers view the process as acquiring the high skills and instrumental techniques to achieve an exceptional performance outcome (Folkestad, 2006). Formal music education at music schools and conservatories places a strong emphasis on the disciplined development of instrumental technique and its application in sensitively interpreting a selected repertoire of musical compositions (Green, 2016; Kingsbury, 2001; Hill, 2009). As a result, students are consistently involving in practicing their music, encompassing balanced technical aspects such as scales, arpeggios, études, and the assigned repertoire, adhering to school and performance-driven rituals (Green, 2016; Kingsbury, 2001; Hill 2009). In this context, instrumental teachers often prioritize the development of technique, expressiveness, and repertoire on the instrument itself, leading to limited exploration of extramusical materials such as social or cultural contexts (Green, 2016; Powell, 2011).

The concepts of competitiveness and perfection within formal learning environments, which emphasize skill development and advanced techniques on instruments have some contradictories in regard to benefits and challenges (Hess, 2021; Green, 2016; Kingsbury, 2001). These concepts can be beneficial when musicians have good skills and high techniques because that will open many opportunities to them whether in the workplace or on their further education,

such as meeting audition requirements (Hess, 2021). On the other hand, maintaining high technical standards and continuous practice may lead to stress for classical musicians, especially in situations where their musical abilities are consistently tested through formal assessment routines or the looming possibility of losing their job or position in an orchestra (Green, 2016). These pressures can manifest during private studio sessions, rehearsals, and formal concerts as well (Kingsbury, 2001). In contrast, within numerous musical ensembles from diverse cultures, the concepts of "perfectionism" and competitiveness are not the primary goals. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the learning process itself rather than solely on formal performance. As a result, the learning environment, whether during rehearsals or public performances, would provide more space for exploring various social, historical, and cultural aspects of the music, and it tends to be less stressful, more relaxed, and engaging for students (Boyce, 2015; Haskett, 2009; Powell, 2011; Solís, 2004). However, this may not always be the situation with some ensembles from diverse cultures.

Cultural Representation and Balancing Expectations

The formal approach to music learning within Western classical music has cultivated a culture among its students that there is only "one way" to learn and perceive music (McKoy & Lind, 2023; Woody, 2012). This perspective has led to certain beliefs that may not necessarily align with other musical styles. Kingsbury (2001) pointed out that certain concepts and cultural characteristics heavily emphasized in musical practices within US music schools might not exist in many music cultures outside of Western societies. Therefore, students' Western musical backgrounds, identities, and assumptions might lead some of them to encounter conflicts with some instructional methods in their initial attempts to learn different types of music within ensembles that differ from what they are accustomed to (Morford, 2007; Schippers, 2010; Solís,

33

2004; Wood & Harris, 2018). This could particularly manifest when they are learning by ear, engaging with intricate rhythms, or exploring improvisation. This, in turn, could present challenges for some ensemble directors, as they might feel the need to adjust their practices to align with students' musical backgrounds and the school norms (Morford, 2007; Powell, 2011; Schippers, 2010; Solís, 2004). When directors of music ensembles from diverse cultures shift their instruction to fit within the school system, they might not be able to provide a teaching and learning experience that aligns with the ways in which the music is commonly taught in its cultural origins. This could become particularly obvious when teachers employ music notation and adopt more Westernized pedagogical approaches and concepts to musics that are originally taught and transmitted orally (Morford, 2007; Schippers, 2010; Solís, 2004).

This shift in pedagogical practices within certain music ensembles from various cultures has raised numerous issues and concerns about cultural representation (Morford, 2007; Powell, 2011; Solís, 2004). Given that many music schools in the US prioritize performance, the expectation for formal public performances has become the norm and the ultimate goal for most music students (Kingsbury, 2001). Consequently, matters of cultural representation on multiple levels are frequently discussed among many ensemble directors, as highlighted in Solís' (2004) textbook. Some directors have encountered challenges in effectively representing the rich cultures they value within their instruction, largely due to the pressures of public performance expectations. These discussions underscore the continuous consideration of cultural representation issues as long as directors admit and address the cultural dimensions between them as "teachers" and their students, as well as between both parties (with the teacher also being considered a "performer") and the cultures they aim to represent. Additionally, many of these directors have expressed their concerns regarding appropriate cultural representation,

especially when facing the task of presenting semesterly concerts featuring students with experience in the new music and have only recently engaged with that music. In some cases, instructors have felt that their presentations did not appropriately represent the music or meet audience expectations. This feeling arises when the performance falls short of conveying the complexities and beauty of the music to audiences who might experience amateur performances as their first and last exposure. Hence, some negotiations may arise surrounding the teaching approaches, selection of appropriate repertoire, and adapting performance styles to cope with these sorts of challenges (see Morford, 2007; Solís, 2004; Powell, 2011).

Therefore, some ensemble directors grappled with a dilemma concerning how to address challenges in adapting performances to align with the audience's expectations, particularly when aiming for a musical experience that resonates with and is felt by everyone (Solís, 2004). Interestingly, Kingsbury (2001) employed the term "social distance" to critique the level of interaction, engagement, and relationship between performers and audiences in music schools and conservatories in the US. He explained how music schools cultivate performer characteristics and adopt recital rituals that negatively impact such interaction. The common protocols of recital halls in US music schools, which tend to separate the audience from performers and make them passive participants, might not be suitable for many cultures (Kingsbury, 2001). Some music styles in various cultures are participatory in nature and not well-suited to be placed in recital halls or on stages in presentational contexts, as this sort of placement might cause them to lose significant social meanings and values, as well as cultural characteristics (Turino, 2008). Concerns about engaging with and creating a community through performance were prominent in Solís' (2004) text, as some directors raised and were concerned about when reflecting on their own practices within Western music institutions. The active

35

involvement, communication, and interaction between the audience and performers are integral to many music-making cultures around the world. When these types of music are placed in recital halls, some ensemble directors might find it challenging to maintain such audience active engagement. In spite of these challenges, public performances might offer some advantages in some cases, such as fostering the exposure of students of these ensembles to a diverse range of communities, both within and outside the music institutions (Powell, 2011; Solís, 2004; Wood & Harris, 2018). When ensemble directors actively involve varied communities in their concerts, they might introduce "new faces" to the "recital hall," faces that students might not typically encounter during their more "formal" performances. Furthermore, directors from various music traditions often extend music practices beyond the confines of the classroom and recital hall, encouraging students to perform within the communities of those muiscs. This approach not only strengthens the bond between students and the community but also provides them with fresh avenues for interaction, both with people and music. Therefore, by incorporating ensembles representing diverse cultural backgrounds, the barriers that often separate communities can be dismantled, fostering a greater sense of cultural awareness, understanding, and global engagement (Anderson & Campbell, 2010; Biernoff & Blom, 2002; Boyce, 2015; Frank, 2014; Haskett, 2009; Pertl, 2017; Powell, 2011; Schippers, 2010; Solís, 2004; Wood & Harris, 2018).

The considerations about potentially losing the social, cultural values, meanings, and characteristics of certain types of music raise questions about the institutionalization process and how these types of ensembles can integrate with academia while preserving their significant cultural practices. Certain musicians have expressed concerns that the formal incorporation of vernacular musics, which are oral variation-based traditions, into educational institutions could lead to the standardization of musical styles and repertoires, and they fear that this

institutionalization might compromise the inherent essence of music found in its rich and natural variations (Frank, 2014; Hill, 2009). Talty (2017) indicated that the balance between the institutionalization of community-based musics and respecting diverse music perspectives in aesthetic and social terms is a potential concern. Structured and formalized music curricula inevitably give preference to specific elements of a musical culture over others, raising concerns within communities about how music institutions align with, accommodate, or deviate from prevailing Western teaching models when teaching community-based music. Thus, the world-wide challenge lies in effectively integrating suitable teaching approaches tailored to vernacular musical practices within university settings (Frank, 2014; Talty, 2017). One of the challenges linked to the integration of certain music traditions into music institutions might be the lack of essential learning resources associated with these traditions, such as instruments, textbooks, and audio-visual materials. Thus, finding and utilizing suitable learning resources play an essential role in appropriately representing music cultures within the school context and ensuring a tangible connection to their cultural origins (Volk, 1998). However, the significant technological and political shifts in the early 21st century have transformed the circumstances in which advancements in communication technologies have bridged the gap between academic institutions and field research locations, making it easier to organize projects across long distances and facilitating the sharing of musical materials to a greater extent than before (Wood & Harris, 2018).

Talty (2017) further explained that community-based music ensembles often don't require knowledge of Western music notation or theory for enrollment. They transmit musical knowledge through methods akin to those outside the higher music education paradigm (Folkestad, 2006; Frank, 2014; Talty, 2017). This situation raises questions about how music

institutions, which heavily rely on Western educational models, address challenges like aural

musical transmission and adapting pedagogies for vernacular music (Folkestad, 2006; Talty,

2017). Therefore, Talty (2017) suggested that putting these questions into considerations and

making collaborative relationships between music institutions and local musical communities

can incorporate external practitioners' insights, ensuring relevant and inclusive curriculum

design. Such collaborations maintain the alignment of the teaching and learning practice of these

musics with various stakeholders' needs and expectations. In addition, Schippers (2010)

illustrated that when some musical traditions that have been vibrant and alive for centuries are

institutionalized and put in presentational, formal contexts, it can result in treating them like

artifacts in "a music museum." This approach can eliminate the creativity that is a crucial aspect

of these traditions. In essence, by confining these traditions within the boundaries of an

institution, the dynamic and evolving nature of the music can be restricted, limiting its ability to

continue growing and adapting. While institutionalization of certain music ensembles with a

consistent balance of their genuine practices brings a wide variety of advantages to music

students (Talty, 2017), institutionalization becomes a critical concern when attempting to push

certain types of music into academic frameworks and compel them to adhere to music school

norms. This is simply because musics are diverse around the world and are not universally

unified in the ways they are taught, learned, perceived, or engaged with. Assuming that all

musics can be approached in the same "universal" way raises further concerns about social

justice in music education (Hess, 2017).

Broadening Perspectives: Beyond Universal Claims

Some music scholars addressed the myth of music as "a universal language." According

to Koza (2001), the notion that music serves as a universal language with the ability to surpass

the limitations of spoken or written communication is "a myth," though it is just one among many overstated claims about music's capacities that trace back to the era of the ancient Greeks. Music educators of the 19th century often leaned on these claims as they endeavored to persuade skeptical school boards about the educational value of music. The influence of these early educators is discernible in writings from the first half of the 20th century, where the myth of a universal musical language gained popularity and, to a certain extent, continues to persist today (Koza, 2001). Furthermore, assuming the universality of music fosters "color-blind" ideologies because music cannot start to transcend cultural boundaries or break down racial prejudices if it is viewed as an entity apart from the culture from or social contexts which it springs (Bradley, 2015; Hess, 2017; Koza, 2001). Bradley (2015) stated, "[t]hose who accept the myth of music's universality often fail to acknowledge that the choice of *what music* cannot be separated from the issue of *whose music* to include in the curriculum" (p. 196). By overlooking the significant connection between a type of music and certain culture, music teachers may apply only what they know best (the Western music canon), believing they are reaching all students "because of their reliance on the myth of music as a universal language" (Bradley, 2015, p 169). Music teachers with this sense might be color-blind because they treat everyone the same assuming that all students are the same (Bradley, 2015; Hess, 2015). When teachers only deliver "the best" music, they can easily hide behind a misguided sense of equipping students with equitable music education, overlooking the reality that such musical curricular selections reflect a specific and narrow cultural perspective (Bradley, 2015).

Certainly, there is an urgent need to increase the integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures into music curricula due to their educational, musical, and cultural advantages. Many music educators recognize that acquiring knowledge in various musical languages and

dialects is an essential form of readiness for today's globally interconnected environment (Biernoff & Blom, 2002; Campbell et al., 2016; Pertl, 2017; Schippers, 2010). Such integration holds the potential to consistently challenge the existing status quo and counter prevalent assumptions and practices (Boyce, 2015). Embracing a multitude of these types of ensembles introduces a diverse array of educational approaches, strategies, processes, and objectives that extend beyond the confines of the Western European classical tradition (Anderson & Campbell, 2010; Boyce, 2015; Dunbar-Hall, 2005; Campbell, 2010; McKoy, 2003; Solís, 2004). By exposing students to alternative methods of musical learning and immersing them in the musical traditions of various cultures, their horizons expand significantly. This expansion, in turn, enhances their musical skills, musicianship, and leadership capabilities while enriching their musical repertoire. As a result, students come to realize that there exist diverse music cultures, each with its unique teaching and learning processes, distinct from the conventions often predominant within the border of music buildings. Thus, incorporating music instruction that embraces multicultural perspectives encourages both students and prospective teachers can to recognize that musics and cultures around the world are "different but equally valid," and they can think of music in various ways and gain fresh perspectives, rooted in genuine interpretations of a variety of opinions and music teaching and learning approaches that lead to enriched cultural and global understanding and awareness (Anderson & Campbell, 2010, p.1). This, in turn, would serve to refute the assumption of White supremacists that Western classical music is "superior" to all Others and the "best" among the rest.

Another issue tied to the concept of music as a universal language is that individuals who adhere to this assumption often perceive music solely as sound, neglecting the vital link between its social and cultural contexts. This oversight ignores the fundamental fact that for music to

effectively communicate, akin to language, both performers and listeners must possess a basic understanding of the cultural and social contexts inherent to that music (Bradley, 2015; Campbell, 2018; Koza, 2001). Koza (2001) indicated that despite the fact that music is considered in many societies as "a universal phenomenon," music "is bound to social context," and therefore, the culture that creates the music also forms its meaning; hence, instead of "sending a universally understood message, the music of a particular culture may sound alien and incomprehensible to an uninitiated listener" (p. 242). Campbell (2018), in alignment with Koza, indicated that music is neither a universal language nor a collection of separate languages with no shared meaning; it comprises various learned sonic dialects, some familiar from birth and others foreign to one's experience. Just as cultures vary, so do musical expressions, mirroring the diversity of language and culture (Campbell, 2018). People within a culture comprehend their own music due to enculturation and socialization, whereas outsiders may struggle to grasp it (Campbell, 2018; Koza, 2001). To truly understand music, one must engage with its practices and cultural contexts, as each culture's music demands time and effort to appreciate (Campbell, 2018).

Hiring Hurdles: Protocol Hierarchies and Job Security

While the integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures aims to broaden students' musical knowledge by exposing them to new styles of music and their social-cultural significance, the identity, musical background, and cultural experience of the teacher play a crucial role in shaping the desired musical knowledge aligned with this goal. Thus, the question of who should teach these ensembles and the qualifications required for such positions is an ongoing concern (Biernoff & Blom, 2002; Solís, 2004). Many scholars highly recommended hiring native teachers or culture bearers to ensure genuine representation and a realistic

understanding of the music and its cultural dimensions (Anderson & Campbell, 2010; Biernoff & Blom, 2002; Solís, 2004). However, challenges arise due to hiring protocols and hierarchies within music school systems, often excluding and marginalizing faculty from minoritized groups especially those who are not ascribed to Western music scholarship (Robinson, 2019). Thus, hiring native teachers for these ensembles, particularly in secure, full-time positions or tenure tracks, can be difficult. Solís (2004) suggests an alternative option of hiring an ethnomusicologist or foreign practitioner who immersed themselves in a particular culture and gained experience in that culture. However, Solís noted that there is a hierarchy in how these different roles fit within the academic environment. The distinction can impact employment duration, with culture bearers often hired short-term, ethnomusicologists for the long term, and foreign practitioners usually in part-time university roles. Additionally, when these ensembles are considered "extra-curricular" options (Boyce, 2015), or as termed by Bradley (2007) as "curricular add-ons," or even referred to as "additive inclusion" by Robinson (2019), there is a risk that they might be eliminated due to budget constraints, leading to uncertainty and insecurity for ensemble directors (Boyce, 2015). Robinson (2019) argued that to bring about substantial change, music schools should establish permanent hiring positions for music teachers from underrepresented groups and secure places for culturally diverse music programs.

Another issue linked to the institutionalization of some music from various cultures is the common practice of universities prioritizing degree credentials over practical knowledge and experience when hiring instructors, especially since some musicians or music traditions might not have academic music degrees. Therefore, preferences are given to young musicians who have little training in certain music culture but possess diplomas from state music institutes, while senior and highly experienced musicians without formal music degrees are overlooked

(Schippers, 2010). Drawing from this observation, the debate surrounding whether individuals/ culture bearers without formal music degrees should be given an equitable opportunity to teach at universities should be considered if music schools are genuinely committed to broadening their exploration of music styles that have yet to find their place within academia. However, if we aim to evaluate the credential considerations of music schools, what holds greater significance is to what extent music education programs at the collegiate level equip prospective music teachers to effectively teach music from diverse cultures and encourage them to experience a wide array of musical traditions.

Equipping Future Teachers and Curricular Challenges

Unfortunately, music education curricula in music schools are still, practically, directive instead of progressive. The primary challenges associated with undergraduate music education degrees include their extensive coursework and the extended duration it takes for students to obtain teacher certification (Moore, Agudelo, Chapman, Dávalos, Durham, Harris, & Moench, 2017). Thus, many students struggle to complete their degrees within a four-year timeframe, as they are advised to maintain a heavy course load each semester, including summers, which is difficult to manage alongside external commitments outside the school. This fast-paced approach also discourages students from pursuing additional courses beyond the basic degree requirements, which could further delay their graduation. While this issue is prominent in music education, other music degrees, such as performance, face similar challenges (Moore et al., 2017; Solís, 2004). Hence, music education curricula are directive, in essence, directing students to concentrate on band, orchestra, and choir, overlooking the impact of offering courses and ensembles from diverse cultures solely as electives or limited "one-time" options, which can discourage students from pursuing them. Even in an optimistic scenario where students engage

43

with such courses once or twice during their degree program, this falls short of fully immersing them in those cultural contexts and providing the necessary, adequate teaching experience of those musics. Nonetheless, when students opt for these courses, they gain valuable exposure to elements that differ from their familiar experiences, introducing them to new and diverse perspectives as mentioned earlier. Bradley (2017) pointed out that while criticisms have been raised about the effectiveness of single-course approaches to change, a positive perspective could regard them as "initial" endeavors to challenge established norms and broaden the scope of music curricula. However, it is important to recognize that in order to comprehend how and why music education curricula operate in their current manner and to bring about meaningful reform without tokenism, educators should analyze the music curricula and the entire music education system through the lens of social justice (Hess, 2015). In this context, Bradley (2011, 2017) illustrated that the language used in music teacher education guidelines within various US State Department of Public Instruction documents continues to be Eurocentric and, in certain instances, subtly confines the repertoire to the established canon. The emphasis of teacher education primarily revolves around teaching techniques for band, choir, and orchestra, with only token recognition of the necessity to delve into music traditions form diverse cultures (Bradley 2011, 2017).

Bradley (2011) argued that the initial US State Department of Public Instruction guideline highlights the necessity for music teachers to possess knowledge and performance skills across all ranges of musical styles. This guideline, which seems to include everyone, actually limits the kinds of instruments that are favored. It gives more importance to conventional European and American band and orchestral instruments, and it leaves out instruments from diverse cultures around the world. Bradley (2011) provided an example of how

44

instruments like the sitar and guqin, which boast extensive solo repertoires and cultural significance, are marginalized and excluded from admission to a North American music teacher education program unless performers of such of these instruments demonstrate a very high level of mastery of Western classical music and its instruments as well. Further, this practice restricts music study and entry into music-teacher certification programs in most North American universities, and consequently, students miss out on opportunities to gain knowledge on diverse musical cultural competencies due to the dominance of a Eurocentric musical language (Bradley 2011).

While music ensembles from diverse cultures would offer students the opportunity to experience and learn new instruments or, in some cases, honor their primary instruments, most students who learn new instruments usually emerge from the semester with beginner-level playing skills (Solís, 2004). Functionally, this would not equip those students with the necessary competence and "credentials" to teach such instruments. As a result, in their future careers, they may unintentionally reinscribe the status quo and primarily teach Western musical instruments. In reality, the level to which prospective music teachers engage with and participate in a music ensemble from a diverse culture greatly influences their ability to adapt their musical skills and advance their proficiency in a new instrument/s and repertoire, adequately immerse themselves in the music and its cultural contexts, and effectively apply the teaching and learning approaches of that musical tradition. This factor plays a pivotal role in determining whether these students are adequately prepared to teach that specific music style. To put it simply, a student who commits to an Arabic music ensemble or oud study for eight semesters significantly differs from a student who only participates once. While we could concisely express the push for greater integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures in a sentence like, "reforming core courses

and allocating more credit hours to diverse music cultures beyond token gestures is necessary," achieving this transformation demands dedicated time and effort, along with critical reflection on our educational practices and prevailing assumptions, to translate these words into concrete actions. We need a genuine educational reform to dismantle the remnants of colonial influence that persist in conventional assumptions and practices.

Bradley (2017) stated that the cultural amnesia of Whiteness might obscure some teachers' awareness that their preferences for noncanonical music stem from a history of colonial dominance, especially since the colonial legacy and preconceived notions of "good music" solidify music schools as bastions of Whiteness, offering room for the exploration of other cultures and music forms without altering foundational assumptions. Thus, altering these fundamental premises stands as the foremost challenge for initiatives advocating curricular transformation.

Although some people might believe that colonialism is an outdated phenomenon, scholars widely recognize that colonialism's remnants and impacts persists today, and it's discouraging to witness how, as educators, we might inadvertently or explicitly uphold many colonial ideologies through our pedagogical practices and engagements (Attas & Walker, 2019; Bradley, 2007, 2015, 2017; Dei & Kempf, 2006; Hess, 2015; Robinson, 2019; Solís, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Attas and Walker (2019) stated,

> The coloniality embedded in access to education and the question of what knowledge
> systems and teaching contexts are privileged… Colonialism is not a historical moment in
> the past, but rather the foundation of ongoing social and economic inequities insidiously
> and often invisibly woven through both global and local relations, has resulted in the

concept of "coloniality," the "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism." (p.6-7)

Hence, Bradley (2015) described the music curriculum in the US as the "hidden colonizer" and argued that the curriculum has a high potential to "colonize" when taking into account "White supremacy," which considers "other cultures to be inherently inferior" (p.199). The issue of colonization is deeply manifested in the prevailing music repertoire, which heavily centers around the Western classical music canon. This high representation is the core curriculum in music schools and departments in most colleges and universities in the US, often allowing minimal to no room for engagement with other musical practices and styles. These conventions are subject to colonization by both overt and covert cultural biases embedded within the curriculum, as such biases can extend beyond the materials themselves, permeating pedagogical environments with colonial notions of cultural superiority, and this, in turn, reinforces prevailing power structures and unequal relations of power (Bradley, 2007, 2015; Hess, 2015; Robinson, 2019). As discussed earlier, even in cases where musics from various cultures and traditions are included, music teachers might inadvertently convey the notion that "appropriate" teaching and performance behaviors align with concepts of cultural Whiteness (Bradley, 2007, 2015; Hess, 2015). Therefore, Bradley (2007) supported the above arguments and stated,

> Colonialism is alive and well, I fear, within many North American music education programs. Our music education curricula continue to validate and recognize particular ([W]hite) bodies, to give passing nods to a token few "[O]thers," and to invalidate many more through omission. The [W]estern musical canon predominates our curricula, while we continue to argue whether popular music should have a place in what our students

learn, and which styles of popular music are "appropriate." Musical practices from around the world remain marginalized as curricular add-ons, if acknowledged at all (p. 134).

Music Notation Dilemma and Cultural Appropriation

Besides the tokenistic aspects of music curricula, the dominant content of these curricula at music schools often directs some music teachers and students to privilege Western notation over the aural transmission methods seen in other musical traditions, which might reinforce many of the mentioned assumptions associated with cultural Whiteness (Bradley, 2015; Hess, 2017, 2021;McKoy & Lind, 2023). Numerous music educators hold the perspective that the sole "right way" of teaching and learning music involves using notation, while they tend to disregard the idea of learning music by ear as a rudimentary and inefficient approach (McKoy & Lind, 2023; Woody, 2012). This viewpoint often stems from a belief that "true" musicianship solely pertains to those capable of reading staff notation (McKoy & Lind, 2023). This rationale is significantly influenced by the prominence of conventional performing ensembles (i.e., band, orchestra, and choir) within the music curricula of middle and high school programs, where the notated compositions from the Western European classical canon have historically dominated. This notion is further solidified in higher education settings, where music program entrance exams emphasize music reading abilities and graduation criteria align with Western traditions akin to those prevalent in the majority of educational music institutions (Hess, 2017, 2021; Koza, 2008; McKoy & Lind, 2023).

Additionally, critical issues could emerge within the integration of musical styles from various cultures into music schools, particularly when instructors attempt to align their teaching with the norms of the Western classical music paradigm, including the use of notation and other

48

Western elements (Bradley, 2015; Hess, 2017; Morford, 2007). Conforming to the Western

classical music paradigm could potentially Westernize music ensembles from various cultures,

causing them to lose their cultural essence. This can happen when instructors employ teaching

methods that do not align with the pedagogical traditions of these ensembles' cultural origins

(Morford, 2007). Hence, the use of music notation in the instruction of musical styles that

historically do not rely on it demands careful consideration.

When music teachers superimpose Western concepts and try to apply Western notation to

musics learned primarily through oral tradition and immersion, they often overlook that Western

music students build many non-written assumptions of music through their enculturation into

Western society, and these assumptions do not necessarily apply when reading music from

unfamiliar traditions, which can reinforce cultural biases and Whiteness (Bradley, 2015). The

excessive use of music notation fails to acknowledge that different musical frameworks require

distinct ways of delivery and perception (Hess, 2017). Music notation carries cultural

information that can be problematic when applied to cultures that do not rely on music notation,

reflecting a musical form of color-blindness where notation is used as a universal starting point

for all students (Bradley, 2015). Furthermore, Talty (2017) stated,

> Adopting Western classical music notation in the instruction of aural musical cultures is a
>
> divisive practice. Western notation can be viewed as a common musical lingua franca
>
> with which to engage with other musics globally, but it is also commonly regarded as an
>
> inappropriate tool with which to transmit traditional and world music idioms (p. 107).

Hence, Bradley (2015) contended that using sheet music could not be considered appropriate

unless teachers have a high level of expertise in the music culture they are teaching and can

effectively explain the non-written aspects of the music notation that deconstructs the Western

cultural messages implied by notation. In essence, if the teacher has in-depth knowledge in the specific music tradition and can bridge the gap between written notation and the cultural nuances of the music, then the use of sheet music may be justified in certain situations, as sheet music can serve as a supplementary tool to enhance the learning experience without detracting from the genuine cultural understanding of the music.

From a musical standpoint, Bennett (2016) argued that relying solely on music notation in the process of teaching and learning is an inadequate approach, characterizing notation as an "unmusical way" of teaching music and an "imperfect system" due to its omission of numerous sound-related elements crucial for musical expression and music-making. Hence, McKoy and Lind (2023) suggested that music teachers should guide their practice and use the concept of "sound before symbol" and "rote to note" to ensure that students engage extensively and regularly with music aurally, allowing them to grasp the structural intricacies of musical communication before they are introduced to decode music staff notation. They added that despite emphasis on this sequential nature of music learning, the push for learners to engage with staff notation often commences prior to their chance to comprehend the interplay of elements in the music they are more accustomed to. As a result, many undergraduate music education students commonly prioritize utilizing music literacy – encompassing reading, writing, and vocalizing notation – as a primary objective for their future teaching endeavors, and numerous elementary educators initiate note-reading exercises as early as kindergarten and first grade (McKoy & Lind, 2023).

This emphasis on the use of music notation cultivates students who excel in performing notated Western music but lack proficiency in vernacular music or music styles from various cultures within educational settings (Hess, 2017, 2021). Many students who are involved in

music beyond school have acquired their musical skills through oral traditions, and unfortunately, those students whose musical abilities are rooted in aural instruction frequently encounter challenges in formal music education settings, leading them to feel marginalized and excluded from prevailing schools of music (Hess, 2017, 2021; McKoy & Lind, 2023). Thus, practices that favor Eurocentric epistemologies while devaluing learning approaches and musical skills associated with other music styles can result in the exclusion of youth of underrepresented groups from music schools (Hess, 2017, 2021).

Racial Discrimination in Auditions: Privileges and Barriers

The strong influence of the Western classical music canon on music curricula has concerning consequences for university music school admissions in the US. This admission process is viewed by many music education researchers as a matter of social justice. It tends to favor candidates rooted in Western classical music while disadvantaging those with diverse musical backgrounds. Scholars argue that this practice is racially discriminatory, as it often excludes students from diverse cultures although have strong musical skills and knowledge of their own musical traditions (Bowman, 2007; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Green, 2016; Gustafson, 2009; Hess, 2017, 2021; Koza, 2008). Koza (2008) underscored that the admission process typically involves auditions with stringent and narrow criteria for assessing musical competence, often focusing on limited definitions of legitimate musical practices. Such auditions create barriers for potential enrollment opportunities for students from historically underrepresented cultural groups. In this context, auditions hinder inclusivity at a time when greater diversity, both in perspectives and experiences, is needed within the music education system (Koza, 2008).

Scholars further explained that auditions, reflecting the structure of musical differences influenced by power dynamics and reinforced through categorical or typological distinctions,

play a pivotal role in either systematically including or excluding students (Bowman, 2007; Hess, 2017, 2021; Green, 2016; Koza, 2008). Koza (2008) highlights that "one unaltered aspect of auditions and the undergraduate programs they precede is the focus on music from the European/American high art *bel canto* tradition," and she described the audition requirements for voice students at her university, "[t]wo art songs to be sung by memory. (Do not audition with jazz, pop, rock, folk, or other musical theatre repertoire… The audition list is color blind because the rules apply regardless of the race or ethnicity of the applicants" (p. 148-149).

By enforcing such rigid repertoire requirements that specifically dictate what will or will not be valued or permitted, universities openly demonstrate their lack of intention to embrace a diverse range of musical genres, styles, or experiences from students of various backgrounds (Bowman, 2007; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Gustafson, 2009; Hess, 2017; Koza, 2008). When only a single musical language is endorsed, and any affinity for or appreciation of other music is disregarded, educational institutions effectively exclude students who quietly and often discreetly engage in musical interests that fall outside the school's approved norms (Hess, 2021; Green, 2016; Koza, 2008;). While audition requirements may not explicitly mention race, they systematically dismiss genres rooted in various musical cultures and traditions outside Western music art and, more significantly, discard forms and genres that Other/ non-White communities in the US are more likely to enjoy and interact with. As a result, these audition requirements "are listening for cultural capital; more significantly, they are listening for affirmations of Whiteness" (Koza, 2008, p.150).

Furthermore, music scholars emphasized how admission practices that reflect systemic racism and exclusion profoundly influence the demographic makeup of music schools in the US (Bowman, 2007; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Hess, 2017; Koza, 2008). These processes contribute to

the creation of a specific demographic of music students, predominantly hailing from a White

background. They underscored that the emphasis on private lessons over an extended period and

the prevailing concentration on Western classical music in most music schools, coupled with

ostensibly "colorblind" admission policies, often result in successful audition candidates being

predominantly White, typically possessing the financial means to sustain private instruction

(Bowman, 2007; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Hess, 2017, 2021; Koza, 2008). Consequently, the

majority of students in most music schools in the US are predominantly White and come from

middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds; according to Elpus and Abril (2011) report,

"[W]hite students were significantly overrepresented among music students" in the US (p.128).

Hess (2021) illuminated the necessity for music school auditions to account for privilege and

differences as a fundamental approach to advocating for policy change. She stressed the

intersection of race and class in music education that restricts access for diverse students. Hess

advocated for a form of positive action that acknowledges varying levels of privilege and

marginalization across diverse identities, thus recognizing the racial and economic nature of

music school auditions as a domain ripe for policy transformation.

Although admission and making music instruction accessible for "All" remain complex

and often tokenized in many music schools, ensembles from diverse cultures are addressing these

issues more effectively. These ensembles typically have a key feature - they are open to everyone

without restrictive auditions or the need for prior musical experience, such as specific Western

music training or the ability to read music notation (Boyce, 2015; Haskett, 2009; Solís, 2004;

Talty, 2017). Participation in these ensembles is open to anyone, regardless of whether they are

affiliated with the music school, other university departments, or the broader community, with no

prerequisite for individuals to demonstrate their musical proficiency (Frank, 2014; Haskett,

2009; Solís, 2004; Talty, 2017). Certain ensembles employ teaching and learning strategies,

musical genres, and cultural values that resonate more closely with the musical and cultural

backgrounds of a large body of students (Frank, 2014; Talty, 2017). This inclusivity attracts

individuals from diverse musical and cultural backgrounds to music schools, creating a more

welcoming milieu that encourages genuine inclusion and better representation of diverse

individuals, educational practice, musics, and cultures (Boyce, 2015; Campbell, 2016; Solís,

2004). This underscores the significant influence of these ensembles and highlights the need to

further integrate them into music programs. Even though such these initiatives represent positive

initial steps towards transforming music programs to be more diverse and inclusive, they are not

the ultimate solution due to the ongoing issues associated with audition procedures for Western

music courses, such as band, orchestra, and choir (as discussed above).

"Luxury of Ignorance:" Resistance to Diversity

One of the significant obstacles that impedes the fruitful transformation of music

programs and perpetuates the aforementioned assumptions and practices is the concept of "White

ignorance." Sullivan and Tuana (2007) brought attention to the critical impacts of White

ignorance that become evident in everyday social interactions and defined it as a combination of

"both false belief and the absence of true belief about people of color, supporting a delusion of

[W]hite racial superiority that can afflict [W]hite and non[-W]hite people alike. White ignorance

operates with a particular kind of social cognition that distorts reality" (p.3). Howard (2006)

further elaborated on this notion of White ignorance, labeling it as the "luxury of ignorance" and

describing it as a hallmark of Whiteness. He built his argument around the isolation of

community structures between White individuals and those from minoritized groups. Often

residing in segregated neighborhoods, many White people move within society without engaging

in close interactions with individuals from minoritized groups. Howard (2006) explained that this perception of dominance leads many White individuals to assume that there is no need to learn or "know anything about those people who are not like them" (p. 14).

Furthermore, Bradley (2015) drew parallels from Howard's (2006) ideas and shed light on the prevalence of the luxury of ignorance among many music educators, as some teachers hold the misconception that racism no longer exists while they teach from a standpoint of Whiteness as ignorance. Hence, this perspective disregards the lived experiences of students of color or those minoritized for various reasons. Bradley (2015) added that this viewpoint dismisses musical styles beyond the Western music canon, which may be more relevant to their students, and explained how some music teachers may have not been trained on musics beyond the Western tradition, or only have limited exposure superficially. Thus, they might respond defensively at the very proposal of including music from another culture or musical tradition. Bradley (2015) and Marx (2006) indicated that the issue of ignorance is obviously common among preservice music teacher candidates, especially when it comes to issues of multicultural music education. Bradley (2015) stated,

> They complain that they do not know anything about other musics; in the extreme, some argue that the movement to teach from a multicultural perspective is an attempt to erase the Western canon from the curriculum, a defensive position that suggests unacknowledged racism. While many teachers embrace multicultural music education wholeheartedly, without exoticizing or tokenizing, there are also those who refuse to venture beyond what they already know, remaining shrouded in the luxury of ignorance, perpetuating an agenda of cultural Whiteness in their classrooms (p. 196).

Furthermore, Wong (2006) illustrated that challenges occur in the early 21st century from conservative resistance against diversity and emerging modes of cultural imperialism, demanding that scholars engage in active articulation, teaching, and advocacy. Wong (2006) added that the impact of larger, critical, and political dynamics is evident throughout music disciplines, and the crucial question is whether music scholars can effectively connect their endeavors to ongoing dialogues in other realms of the humanities and social sciences. Therefore, Jorgensen (2003) suggested that to transform music education, music educators must break free from narrow and rigid viewpoints, and they should embrace a wide-ranging and inclusive approach that transcends restrictive concepts, theories, and paradigms. This requires looking beyond boundaries and acknowledging the inherent complexity of music education, which often involves the convergence of various theoretical types and practical expressions. This complex nature challenges musicians, researchers, teachers, students, and the public alike. Jorgensen (2003) added that the tendency to categorize ideas and approaches into simplistic schools or acronyms has limited genuine dialogue and inquiry. Scholarly cliques form around specific concepts, excluding dissenting voices and leading to polarization. These groups often serve political agendas, imposing certain viewpoints onto the profession. This practice of using restrictive labels and dichotomies oversimplifies matters and fails to address the nuances and complexities of philosophical writings. Therefore, Wong (2006) emphasized the importance of dynamic perseverance to make a change, stating, "[o]ur work, whether research or teaching, is inherently progressive but only as proactive as we insist that it be" (p. 276). Moving forward, a more realistic, open, and nuanced approach is needed to foster keen awareness, broader understanding, fruitful growth, and genuine transformation in music education (Bradley, 2015, 2017;Jorgensen, 2003; Hess, 2017, 2021; Wong, 2006).

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Data Collection: Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the integration of music

ensembles from diverse cultures within a School of Music in the US. Qualitative research, as the

chosen methodology, concentrates on understanding people's perceptions, meanings, and gaining

awareness of their world and experiences, with data primarily consisting of words rather than

numbers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I aimed to understand the experiences of

instructors and students participating in music ensembles from diverse cultures within a specific

School of Music in the US, and therefore, a qualitative research methodology, specifically a

qualitative case study approach, was chosen.

According to Yin (2018), a case study is an appropriate research design when the

researcher seeks to answer "how" or "why" questions and aims to explain a contemporary set of

events over which they have little or no control. Such questions focus on explaining operational

processes over time rather than simply tracking frequencies or incidents. I sought to address four

research questions: (1) How can the integration of music ensembles from various cultures

challenge the dominance of the Eurocentric paradigm of music schools in the US? (2) How are

the instructional objectives applied by the ensemble instructors different from the common music

instruction and practice within Western classical music ensembles? (3) How do ensemble

instructors deal with educational challenges within these ensembles? And (4) Why are students

motivated to participate in these types of ensembles?

Yin (2018) highlighted that a case study aims to investigate a contemporary phenomenon

within its real-world context, providing an in-depth description of the phenomenon. Additionally,

Creswell and Poth (2018) define case study research as a qualitative approach that explores a

bounded system to examine an issue or problem within a real-life, contemporary context, using a specific case as an illustration to uncover meanings and understandings of experiences or situations. The context in qualitative research is crucial, and the participants and phenomena under investigation should always be considered within their natural environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Data collection in qualitative case study research often includes interviews, observations, journals, and other artifacts in order to present findings and themes emerge from the data analysis and reflection. The researcher aims to collect context-specific data and create a holistic account of the case being investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

In this study, the focus was specifically on understanding the experiences of music instructors and students participating in three music ensembles (Indian, Old-Time, and Steelpan Ensembles) during the Spring 2023 semester at a university's School of Music. The unique boundaries of these ensembles, which met on campus for two hours once a week exclusively during the semester, provided a significant context for this particular case. Given the specific and unique nature of the study's context and the emphasis on gaining a deep understanding of the case itself, the case study design reflects an *intrinsic* case study type (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I adopted the social constructivism framework as my theoretical foundation. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that in the context of the social constructivism framework, researchers aim to comprehend the world in which they live and work by developing subjective interpretations of their experiences. These interpretations are diverse and multifold, encouraging the researcher to explore the richness and intricacy of perspectives instead of limiting them to a few predefined categories. Such subjective meanings are often shaped through social interactions and historical contexts rather than being solely ingrained in individuals. Social constructivism

emphasizes that these meanings emerge through interactions with others and are influenced by cultural norms and historical factors present in individuals' lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that, within this framework, researchers should provide questions to participants that are intentionally broad and open-ended to allow the participants to construct their own meanings of various situations within their real-life settings. Additionally, researchers should be mindful that their own backgrounds and experiences influence their interpretations, and therefore, they should actively position themselves in the research process, acknowledging their personal, cultural, and historical biases, and taking these into account while interpreting the data obtained from the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Through applying this framework, I aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals who participate in music ensembles from diverse cultures at the university where I work as a teacher and in which I am enrolled as a student. I developed more broad open-ended questionnaires to ensure that participants have a wide space to express and develop their own comprehensive meanings. I extended my analysis to explore the complexity of various viewpoints and meanings of the participants that were shaped through their social interactions within cultural contexts. I also positioned myself in the research process, acknowledging how my own cultural and professional experiences might shape my understanding of the participants' experiences.

Context for the Study

The focus of this study conducted during the Spring 2023 semester was on three music ensembles from diverse cultures offered at a School of Music in a State University in the Southeastern United States: Indian Ensemble, Old-Time Ensemble, and Steelpan Ensemble. These ensembles serve as one-credit-hour courses and provide students with the opportunity to

explore and learn music from different cultural backgrounds. Previously, these ensembles were categorized in the music education curriculum as "eclectic" ensembles, but they have now been grouped under a single category called "Ensembles." These ensembles are offered in both the Spring and Fall semesters, and students can take them several times, but they need to either register for the ensemble each semester or apply to audit the class.

One notable aspect of these ensembles is that there are no audition prerequisites for registration, and individuals with varying levels of musical experience can join. This includes undergraduate or graduate students, music or non-music majors, faculty members, and community members. The enrollment numbers for each ensemble during the Spring 2023 semester varied. The Indian Ensemble had three undergraduate and two graduate students; the Old-Time Ensemble had twenty-five undergraduate and three graduate students; and the Steelpan Ensemble had eight undergraduate and one graduate student.

Each ensemble met once a week for two hours, with specific time slots allocated for each. The Indian Ensemble rehearsed on Fridays from 1 to 3 pm; the Old-Time Ensemble met on Tuesdays from 5 to 7 pm; and the Steelpan Ensemble gathered on Wednesdays from 5 to 7 pm. The rehearsal spaces also differed for each ensemble. The Indian Ensemble used a regular-sized classroom where they accustomed to rearranging the tables and chairs and bring their own carpets for each rehearsal, as they sat on the floor while learning. The Old-Time Ensemble rehearsed in a large room specially designed for accommodating big ensembles. The Steelpan Ensemble shared a big percussion room, where they set up and remove their instruments during each rehearsal, as the room served other operational purposes as well.

The teaching and learning processes within all three ensembles are rooted in the oral tradition, without involvement of music notation. Students learn to play instruments associated

specifically with each ensemble's music tradition. The Indian Ensemble mainly uses instruments such as the sarod, sitar, and tabla, and allows the utilization of other instruments but they should not be electronics, such as keyboards. The Old-Time Ensemble incorporates fiddle instruments like the violin and viola, as well as the double bass, banjo, guitar, ukulele, mandolin, dulcimer, and piano. The Steelpan Ensemble focuses on steelpan instruments, along with a drum kit and congas. The School of Music owns the instruments for the Indian and Steelpan Ensembles, and the School also provides some instruments for students in the Old-Time Ensemble.

Additionally, these ensembles connect students with various music traditions and cultures. The Indian Ensemble covers various aspects of North Indian, Hindustani Classical music such as *Taals* (rhythms) and *Raags* (melodic scheme/ or modes), particularly associated with the Gharana lineage in India. Students learn these elements and then apply them in contexts of music pieces or compositions called *Gat*. The Old-Time Ensemble delves into the realm of American vernacular music traditions referred to as "old-time music." The course focuses on teaching, learning, and sharing various American folk traditions, including dance music, folk songs, social music, work songs, ballads, blues, and sacred music. Also, active engagement in participatory singing is expected from all students. The Steelpan Ensemble introduces students to steelpan instruments and their performance styles. The class commonly covers repertoire associated with steelpan music in Trinidad and Tobago, such as Calypso and Soca. All these ensembles go beyond performance, incorporating historical, social, and cultural insights related to the music they teach within their instructional approach. The presence of diverse operating conditions, unique teaching and learning processes, and varied musical and cultural knowledge within the Indian, Old-Time, and Steelpan Ensembles in contrast to other large ensembles in the School of Music underscores the compelling need for this study.

Protocol for Participant Selection and Recruitment

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) exemption in late February of the

Spring 2023 semester, I initiated the process of participant recruitment for my research project.

In qualitative research, the goal is not statistical generalization, making *probabilistic sampling*

unnecessary or unjustifiable. Instead, qualitative research commonly employs *nonprobability*

sampling, specifically *purposeful sampling* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling

operates on the assumption that the researcher aims to discover, understand, and gain insights.

Therefore, the selection of the sample should maximize the potential for learning (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016). The concept of purposeful sampling is applied in qualitative research, where the

researcher chooses individuals and sites for study based on their ability to purposefully

contribute to the understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). To ensure a comprehensive description of multiple perspectives and represent

diverse cases in my study, I followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) suggestion of employing

maximum variation as a sampling strategy in the case study approach. I purposefully selected

participants from various musical and professional backgrounds to enrich the study's findings.

To ensure the voluntary participation of individuals in my research, I initially had

informal meetings with each potential participant individually. During these meetings, I provided

them with an overview of my research and gauged their interest in participating. Once I received

confirmation of their willingness to take part, I proceeded to send them a formal recruitment

letter via email. The recruitment letter included the necessary information about the study and its

objectives. Alongside the recruitment letter, I also included the IRB consent form. This

document ensured that participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures,

potential risks, and benefits, as well as their rights as research subjects. By sharing this

information in advance, participants had the opportunity to review and understand the consent form before providing their formal consent to participate.

In total, my study aimed to include ten participants who could offer valuable insights. This group encompassed various key stakeholders, including an ethnomusicology professor who co-founded the three ensembles (i.e., Indian, Old-Time, and Steelpan Ensemble) and assists with administrative issues associated with these ensembles. Additionally, the three directors of these ensembles (i.e., Indian, Old-Time, and Steelpan Ensemble directors) were also included as participants. Furthermore, to ensure a well-rounded perspective, I selected two students from each ensemble to participate in the study. Some of the student participants had enrolled in more than one ensemble before Spring 2023 semester or took the same ensembles several times. Although the initial process intended to select two students from each ensemble, I found value in having student participants share and reflect on their overall experiences within the ensembles that they took.

Participants

I am pleased to note that all the individuals I approached agreed to participate in the research study, demonstrating their interest and willingness to contribute to the investigation. The following passage offers a succinct summary of the participants' professional and musical backgrounds, and their roles within the study.

Dr. John, a distinguished professor of ethnomusicology from Canada, brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the current study. His educational background includes a Bachelor of Music (BMUS) degree with a focus on classical guitar, a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Philosophy, a Master of Music (MM) in Ethnomusicology, and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in

Ethnomusicology. With a research interest spanning diverse music cultures worldwide, he has particularly explored a wide range of musics in Southeast Asia.

In the present study, Dr. John plays two vital roles, both of which are noteworthy to discuss. First, he serves as a member of my dissertation committee, a decision I made based on his exceptional expertise in the field. His profound understanding of the subject matter makes his input invaluable to the study's success.

Furthermore, Dr. John actively participated as a member in the current study. During the planning phase of my research procedures, I recognized the significance of including him, despite his role as a committee member. Several reasons contributed to this decision. First, having worked at the School of Music for nearly two decades, Dr. John possesses extensive knowledge of the School's history and its transformative journey over time. This perspective added depth to the study, offering valuable insights into the changes and developments that have shaped the institution.

Second, Dr. John holds a pivotal position as the co-founder of the three ensembles under investigation. His intimate familiarity with these ensembles equips him with a deep understanding of the challenges they have encountered from their inception to the present day. Additionally, he maintains strong connections with various stakeholders within the School of Music, including administration personnel, faculty members, staff, ensemble directors, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as community members. His role as a coordinator among these individuals serves to advocate for and foster a rewarding experience for the ensembles within the School of Music. Dr. John's substantial contributions and exceptional dedication to both academia and music performance make him an invaluable asset to this study.

Mr. Rohan, born in India, has served as the Indian Ensemble director at the School of Music since the ensemble's establishment in Fall 2017, marking "the first Indian classical music ensemble course in any university in [the State]," according to Mr. Rohan. With a bachelor's degree in Performing Arts from India, with emphasis on Tabla (i.e., equivalent to three years of undergraduate study in the US) and an Master of Music (MM) in Music Education, Mr. Rohan's musical journey began during his childhood when he was 8 in a musically inclined family. His father, whom he respectfully refers to as Guru (i.e., a spiritual teacher), nurtured his passion for music from a young age, providing training in Tabla, Sarod, and Sitar for over 30 years. While initially starting with the Sitar, Mr. Rohan later found his true passion in the Sarod. However, he was encouraged by his father to learn the Tabla as well, recognizing its significance in mastering the Sarod. This led him to pursue a three-year training program in Tabla and later complete the "Sangeet Visharad," a six-year program focused on the Sarod. Additionally, Mr. Rohan's captivating concert performances have made significant contributions to Indian classical music. He has achieved recognition through various concerts held at prestigious venues and universities in India, the UK, and the US. His talent has been captured in two acclaimed albums, and he has been featured in radio and TV interviews both in India and the US, promoting the rich heritage of Indian classical music.

Mr. Rohan is dedicated to preserving the sacred tradition of Indian classical music and emphasizes its profound significance beyond mere entertainment. Since 2006, he has been committed to passing on his rich musical heritage by teaching Indian classical Music, Sarod, Sitar, and Tabla in various locations across the State. This dedication has fostered a broad-based student base, attracting learners from several states across the US. In addition to his musical pursuits, Mr. Rohan holds a post-graduation degree in Computer Engineering and currently

works as an IT Project Leader in his full-time job. Despite his demanding professional responsibilities, his passion for music remains undeterred as he continues to teach and share his musical expertise outside of his official working hours in information technology. Mr. Rohan's dedication to Indian classical Music, his commitment to education, and his ability to balance his musical pursuits with a demanding career in information technology exemplify his multifaceted talents and unwavering love for music.

Dr. Cecilia, a highly accomplished musician and educator raised in a state in the Northeastern United States, serves as the director of the Old-Time Ensemble. Dr. Cecilia's educational background includes a BM in Music Education, an MM in Viola Performance, and a Ph.D. in Music Education. As a full-time job, she teaches sixth through eighth-grade orchestra at a public school. Alongside her teaching responsibilities, Dr. Cecilia's passion for music education and performance is exemplified through her involvement in clinics, research, and presentations at prestigious conferences. She is an active performer with old-time string bands, earning top prizes at various festivals and conventions across the US.

In Spring 2008, Dr. Cecilia enrolled as a student in the Old-Time Ensemble when it was initially introduced at the School of Music. Coincidentally, this was her final semester of her master's program. However, the former director recognized her talent and potential, encouraging her to venture into the community and continue her exploration of old-time music. Driven by this advice, she actively sought opportunities to immerse herself in the world of old-time music beyond the confines of academia. This decision led her to connect with other accomplished old-time musicians, forming invaluable relationships and deepening her understanding of the genre. After enriching community experiences, Dr. Cecilia returned to the School of Music to pursue her Ph.D. in 2012 and resumed her participation in the Old-Time Ensemble. As the ensemble

grew in size and popularity, she began co-teaching the fiddle section, sharing her knowledge and skills with fellow students. This role allowed her to contribute to the ensemble's development and foster a collaborative learning environment. In Spring 2016, Dr. Cecilia's exceptional dedication and expertise caught the attention of the former director, who recommended her as the director of the Old-Time Ensemble. This recognition of her talent and commitment resulted in her assuming the leadership position.

Dr. Llanzo, originally from the Caribbean, became the Steelpan Ensemble director at the School of Music in Spring 2019. While primarily hired as a professor of ethnomusicology, Dr. Llanzo's deep experience and passion for steelpan performance led to the establishment and successful running of the Steelpan Ensemble. With a Bachelor of Music degree focusing on Steelpan, a Master of Music in Steelpan Performance, a Master of Arts in Ethnomusicology, and a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology, Dr. Llanzo's research focuses on Caribbean music in Africa, and his scholarly work has been published in esteemed journals.

Dr. Llanzo's musical journey started during his formative years in the Caribbean when he was introduced to playing the steelpan within a church setting. This early exposure fueled his passion for the instrument, and he continued honing his skills throughout high school and college, accumulating almost 20 years of teaching and learning experience focused on the steelpan. During his undergraduate studies, Dr. Llanzo had the opportunity to move and participate in a steelpan program located in Trinidad, where the instrument originated. This program offered comprehensive training in steelpan performance, including one-on-one lessons with experienced steelpan teachers. He actively engaged in multiple steelpan ensembles, delving into various aspects such as orchestration, arranging, and pedagogy. The program's emphasis on steelpan music provided him with a formal education in this unique instrument. Simultaneously,

Dr. Llanzo immersed himself in community steel bands in the Caribbean, where he gained invaluable knowledge not only in playing the steelpan but also in teaching and directing. The community steel bands played a vital role in shaping his understanding of different teaching approaches. Dr. Llanzo considers his time with these bands as an integral part of his musical education. He continued these practices and studied steelpan during his master's study as well. Through a combination of formal training and hands-on experience within both academic and community settings, he has developed a profound understanding of the steelpan, its intricacies, and its pedagogical aspects. His comprehensive education has equipped him with the skills necessary to excel as a performer, instructor, and director within the realm of steelpan music.

Max, a resident of a state in the Southeastern United States, was a student in the Indian Ensemble in Spring 2023. He initially pursued his undergraduate studies as a composition student but later transitioned to the Popular Music and Technology Program. His self-taught guitar skills, focused on rock music, developed from a young age. In the Indian Ensemble, Max explored the Sarod. Additionally, he has previously been a member of the Old-Time, Steelpan, and Middle Eastern Ensembles.

Ruby, from Asia, is another student in the Indian Ensemble in Spring 2023. Currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) in percussion performance, her musical endeavors began with piano at the age of five before transitioning to percussion, particularly drums back in her home country. Her undergraduate and master's degrees were from the US and were also in percussion performance. Ruby has taken the Tabla in the Indian Ensemble for three semesters. She previously participated in the Steelpan and Middle Eastern Ensembles.

Ian, a native of a state in the Southeastern United States, was a student in the Old-Time Ensemble in Spring 2023. He was a senior undergraduate music education student, and his

primary instrument was the viola, which he began formally studying in the sixth grade. Ian's musical journey initially involved informal guitar playing before transitioning to the viola. Ian took the Old-Time Ensemble for seven semesters, and he started with playing the fiddle and later switched to the guitar. Since the third semester, he has been playing the banjo.

Maya, hailing from a state in the Southeastern United States, was another student in the Old-Time Ensemble in Spring 2023. She is a senior music education major specializing in instrumental music. With the classical violin as her primary instrument, Maya began her musical journey in the sixth grade. She has been participating in the Old-Time Ensemble for five semesters playing the violin.

Alice, from a state in the Southeastern United States, participated in the Steelpan Ensemble in Spring 2023. As a Ph.D. student in music education with a post-baccalaureate certificate in ethnomusicology, Alice teaches undergraduate music education courses and offers guitar and ukulele lessons. Her musical background stems from informal music-making with her family, particularly engaging in bluegrass jam sessions and dancing. She began taking piano lessons at the age of five and later expanded her musical involvement by joining bands and choirs at her school. Alice completed her undergraduate and master's studies in music education as well. In her previous semesters, Alice played the dulcimer as a member of the Old-Time Ensemble.

Thara, originally from India, joined the Steelpan Ensemble in Spring 2023. While not a music major, Thara is an employee at the university, running direct online programs in the College of Arts and Sciences and serving as an adjunct faculty in Media Studies. Her exposure to formal music training occurred during her childhood with classical Indian dance lessons. However, most of her later musical experiences have been informal and participatory, including

her involvement with the street drum groups. This semester marked her second time participating in the Steelpan Ensemble.

Complementing this information, Table 1 presents a concise overview of the participant demographics and their specific roles within the study (I referred to participants by pseudonyms and excluded any identifiers to protect their anonymity; some participants preferred to choose their pseudonyms).

Table 1. Participant Demographics and Roles

Participant	Country of Origin	Age	Gender	Role
Dr. John	Canada	Not shared	Male	Professor of ethnomusicology
Mr. Rohan	India	53	Male	Indian Ensemble director
Dr. Cecilia	USA	Not shared	Female	The Old-Time Ensemble director
Dr. Llanzo	The Caribbean area	36	Male	The Steelpan Ensemble director
Max	USA	28	Male	An Indian Ensemble student
Ruby	Asia	28	Female	An Indian Ensemble student
Ian	USA	Not shared	Male	An Old-Time Ensemble student
Maya	USA	21	Female	An Old-Time Ensemble student
Alice	USA	32	Female	A Steelpan Ensemble student
Thara	India	62	Female	A Steelpan Ensemble student

Researcher Role

In this research, I took on the role of a participant-observer, enabling me to actively

engage with the three groups while collecting data. Participant observation is a mode of

observation within the case study approach, which is particularly useful in situations where the

researcher is not merely a passive observer but actively participates in the actions being studied

(Yin, 2018). Through participant observation, the researcher is involved in the daily routines and

activities of the groups under investigation, establishes ongoing relationships with the

participants, and continuously observes their actions and interactions (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw,

2011). The researcher then regularly and systematically documents their observations and learns

as they actively participate in the events and activities that unfold within the groups (Emerson et

al., 2011).

Initially, when discussing my research role with my dissertation committee chair and one

committee member, they suggested adopting a nonparticipant-observer role, which involves

observing from a distance without direct involvement or interruption to the activities or people

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). This recommendation arose from concerns about my ability to actively

participate in all the sessions of the three ensembles within a single semester, as I had received

my IRB exemption midway through the Spring of 2023 and had already missed some sessions.

However, another committee member advised me to act as a participant-observer, considering

the participatory nature of the music in the Old-Time and Steelpan ensembles. He suggested that

sitting at a distance and taking notes without active involvement in the activities might appear

odd. Instead, He encouraged me to consult with the ensemble directors to determine their

preferred level of engagement during their instruction. Following these discussions, I sought

permission from the directors to actively participate in the activities during my study, and they

all granted their consent. I took the role of a student within the three ensembles, playing the oud in the Indian Ensemble, the ukulele in the Old-Time Ensemble, and the conga in the Steelpan Ensemble.

Furthermore, given the specific focus of this study on understanding the experiences of music instructors and students within these three ensembles, being a participant-observer allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning dynamics within these ensembles and explore the meanings that can emerge from these experiences. Additionally, as I adopted the social constructivism framework, I should have social, active interactions with participants in order to obtain valuable meanings about their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I recognized the value of "immersing" myself in these groups to achieve these goals, as suggested by Emerson et al. (2011). By actively participating in the daily activities of the ensembles, I sought a profound "immersion" into their worlds to comprehend what the participants experience as meaningful and important. This immersion allowed me to gain an insider's perspective on how individuals lead their experience, engage in their daily activities, and attribute significance to their actions, which heightened my sensitivity to their interactions and processes, granting me access to the fluidity of their experiences (Emerson et al., 2011). This approach emphasized the dynamic nature of the participants' experiences, focusing on the sequences of interactions and interpretations that shape the unpredictable and emergent meanings and outcomes (Emerson et al., 2011).

Relationship to Participants

As the director of the Middle Eastern Ensemble and a Ph.D. student in the School of Music, my pre-existing relationships with some participants in this study were diverse. Dr. John is a dissertation committee member, my Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Ethnomusicology

advisor, and mentor. He played a pivotal role in the initial planning of this study. However, our meetings during the data collection process solely focused on issues related to the Middle Eastern Ensemble. Additionally, I took several ethnomusicology courses with Dr. John in previous semesters, further strengthening our academic connection. He also serves as the instructor of record for the graduate section of the Middle Eastern Ensemble, coordinator and supporter for ensemble/s needs, and was actively involved as a performer playing the oud and nay/ney in various semesters.

My relationships with the ensemble directors were multifaceted, combining professional interactions and student-teacher dynamics. During professional meetings hosted by Dr. John, I engaged with ensemble directors to discuss ensemble-related matters. Collaborative opportunities coordinated also by Dr. John, such as joint concerts with the Indian and Steelpan Ensembles, further facilitated interactions with the directors. I also collaborated with Dr. Cecilia on teaching sessions at her school, where we taught Arabic tunes to seventh and eighth graders, who later performed with the Middle Eastern Ensemble at their end-of-school-year concert. Dr. Cecilia was also an active performer in the Middle Eastern Ensemble playing the violin during Spring 2018. As a student, I participated in the Indian and Old-Time Ensembles during Spring 2020 and took ethnomusicology courses with Dr. Llanzo in both Fall 2020 and Fall 2022.

I got to know Ruby during Fall 2020 and Max during Spring 2021 when they were students in the Middle Eastern Ensemble. My interactions with Ruby continued through subsequent classes that we took together. Alice was also a fellow classmate in several courses during my master's and Ph.D. studies. In contrast, I did not have the opportunity to closely know Ian, Maya, and Thara until the beginning of this study; however, during the interviews and observations, I had the chance to interact closely with them.

Procedures

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over a period of six months, specifically from March to August 2023. Case study research draws evidence from various sources, including interviews, field notes from observation, physical artifacts, documentation, and archival records (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). For this research, I employed three sources of data: (a) interviews as the primary data source, (b) field notes derived from observations as a secondary data source, and (c) documentation and artifacts encompassing course syllabi, class readings, class listening materials, and other learning resources available on the Canvas page, which served as additional data.

Interviews

One of the most crucial sources of data in case study research is the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Interviews are particularly valuable in providing explanations and insights into the "hows" and "whys" of key events, as well as offering participants' relativist perspectives (Yin, 2018, p. 118). In this study, I conducted a total of ten semistructured interviews, which are characterized by their open-ended and flexible questioning nature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), lasting between 60 to 120 minutes. Nine interviews were conducted in person, and one interview was conducted via Zoom video/audio conferencing software. The Zoom interview was only video/audio-recorded, and all the remaining interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcripts for subsequent data analysis and interpretation, adhering to Yin's (2018) recommendation.

Of the ten interviews, seven were conducted in one-on-one settings, one interview with the ethnomusicology professor, and two interviews with each ensemble director (i.e., first and

follow up interviews; total = 6). The interview with the ethnomusicology professor was during

the beginning of the study and covered general administrative inquiries related to the

establishment of the ensembles at the School of Music, hiring requirements, sources of support,

the relationship between the ensembles and the School of Music structure, and other educational

aspects, as well as any other relevant topics that emerged during the discussion.

Furthermore, I conducted the first round of interviews with each ensemble director at the

start of the study. These interviews encompassed topics related to the directors' professional

backgrounds, the ensembles' connection to the School structure, the teaching and learning

processes within the ensembles, and issues concerning public performances and community

engagement. These interviews also explored emergent questions arising during the discussions.

Subsequently, during the data analysis phase, I arranged follow-up interviews with each

ensemble director. These interviews served as reflections on the directors' overall experiences

with the ensembles during the Spring 2023 semester and allowed me to engage in a member

check process, address emergent questions from the initial interviews and observations, and

validate some findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In addition to individual interviews, I also conducted three joint interviews with student

participants in the ensembles during the data collection phase of this study. One of these

interviews was via Zoom, and the other two were in person. As qualitative research is emergent

in nature, some aspects of the research process may shift or change as data collection progresses,

especially after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). Initially, I planned to conduct a focus group interview with all student participants

together. A focus group interview involves bringing a group of individuals together to discuss

their views and opinions on a specific topic, facilitated by a moderator or interviewer (Roulston,

2022). However, during the planning phase, I encountered challenges in finding a suitable time slot that accommodated all participants' schedules for the focus group interview. Scheduling meetings with multiple people can be complex and may not always align perfectly with everyone's availability when scheduling focus group interviews (Roulston, 2022).

Upon reviewing the Doodle Poll results, it became apparent that only two student participants could make the interview at the same time. After discussing this issue with my dissertation chair, we decided to conduct joint interviews with pairs of participants instead of the focus group interview, as we could use the same questionnaire without altering the questions. Joint interviews are a practical and effective technique for data collection in qualitative research, involving interviews with two participants paired together by the researcher (Roulston, 2022).

Among the different types of joint interviews described by Roulston (2022), I opted for *formal* group interviews, where the researcher takes a more directive role in seeking specific information. In this context, I directed the discussion between the two participants and guided the response turns and duration to foster a productive conversation and gather valuable information. The joint interviews covered topics related to the students' musical backgrounds, their motivations for enrolling in the ensembles, the teaching and learning processes within the ensembles, the influence of their musical backgrounds and culture on their experience, additional educational aspects, and any emergent issues that surfaced during the discussion.

Observations

Observations play a fundamental role in various types of qualitative research, including case studies, as they offer an invaluable source of evidence by capturing data in the natural setting where the phenomenon of interest unfolds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018) Observation is the most suitable technique when firsthand observation of an activity, event, or

situation is essential, a fresh perspective is sought, behaviors need to be recorded as they occur (Yin, 2018), or when participants might be reluctant or unable to discuss the topic under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For my study, I aimed to delve deeper into the rehearsal activities, teaching and learning processes, and the interactions between instructors and students in the three ensembles. To achieve this, I observed four full instructional sessions of each ensemble after the Spring break, as well as their end-of-semester public performances.

As I had mentioned earlier, qualitative research is inherently flexible and emergent. Initially, I had planned to adopt a nonparticipant-observer role to observe the three ensembles. However, during the plan of the research, I realized the significance of gaining a deeper and more immersive understanding of the music-making process in these ensembles. Thus, I shifted my role to become a participant-observer in the ensembles.

This change in my role brought to light a challenge that I needed to handle during the observations. As a participant-observer, actively engaging in the activities, I found it would be challenging to take accurate field notes while being fully involved in the activities as I might not have sufficient time to make a balance between engaging in the activities and note taking (Yin, 2018), and I need to rely on my memory to recollect the session details, which posed a potential risk of overlooking some critical details of the observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, balancing the role of a participant-observer and taking field notes required careful consideration.

Emerson et al. (2011) mentioned that field researchers engage in active observation of scenes, events, and interactions, wherein they take "mental notes" encompassing various crucial details and impressions, such as the physical settings' characteristics like size, space, colors, sounds, equipment, movements, and interpersonal interactions. These mental notes, often referred to as "headnotes" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 24), serve as initial recordings during the

77

observation phase and act as a foundation for later comprehensive fieldnotes. In my own observation endeavors, I diligently adhered to this practice. After each observed session, I promptly sit in the library to reflect on my impressions and write down essential aspects of the actual events and important interactions that unfolded during rehearsals. As part of the case study protocol, researchers have the flexibility to create their own observational instruments to record specific types of behaviors during designated timeframes while in the field (Yin, 2018). Thus, I created my personalized observation forms to encompass comprehensive details. These forms enabled me to systematically record information about the physical rehearsal settings, the dynamics of the teaching and learning process, interactions between the instructor and students, my own engagement with the instructor and students, the students' interactions amongst themselves, and their interactions with me. Additionally, I incorporated personal reflections on my observations, as well as any unexpected and noteworthy emergent events.

To enhance my ability to remember important events and actions during my observations, I employed a technique called "jottings," inspired by the recommendations of Emerson et al. (2011, p.?). Field researchers often find documenting certain events and impressions in real-time to ensure accuracy and capture essential details, and they go beyond merely holding mental "headnotes" and involve the practice of jotting down brief written records using keywords and phrases—a technique known as "jottings" (Emerson et al., 2011, p.29). Jottings, that often take the form of hastily rendered scribbles detailing actions and dialogues, serve as a way to swiftly translate remembered observations onto paper. By jotting down just a word or two at the moment or shortly after the occurrence, researchers create powerful memory aids, facilitating the recollection of intricate details when later writing the field notes (Emerson et al., 2011). Therefore, I frequently took jottings between the pieces during the rehearsal, during session

breaks, and during the instructor's concept demonstrations, enabling me to enhance the richness and detail of my observation forms later.

Throughout the observation process, informal conversations played a complementary role. As is often the case in qualitative research, informal conversations are naturally intertwined with observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I engaged in brief informal conversations with the ensemble directors after each session to seek clarifications about certain events and actions. Occasionally, during breaks in the sessions, I interacted with the directors and students to gain further insights into the teaching and learning processes. These informal conversations provided valuable context and enriched the overall data collection process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of comprehending and deriving meaningful insights from the collected data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It involves reflecting on, summarizing and synthesizing, and interpreting the information obtained from what participants expressed and what the researcher observed and studied. This process is essential to derive meaning and insights from the data, ultimately helping to address the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Throughout my study, I engaged in a continuous inductive and deductive process to achieve this goal. Data analysis procedure involves a dynamic interplay between concrete data points and abstract concepts, as well as a balance between inductive and deductive reasoning and a blend of description and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Inductive reasoning is commonly employed by qualitative researchers, wherein they systematically build patterns, categories, and themes "from the bottom up," organizing the data into progressively more abstract units of information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018).

This iterative inductive process entails going back and forth between the identified themes and the database until a comprehensive set of themes is established (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once these themes are identified, deductive reasoning comes into play in which researchers examine the data through the lens of these established themes to ascertain if additional evidence supports each theme or if further information needs to be collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a result, while the data analysis begins inductively, the integration of deductive thinking becomes essential as the analysis progresses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The outcomes of this analytical process, comprising the interpretations, understandings, or insights gained, constitute the findings of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, starting with a bottom-up approach, my data analysis process began by organizing the data, running an initial read-through of the data sources, and subsequently coding and classifying themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Management

As emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2018), a critical early stage in data analysis is the organization of data into digital files and the implementation of an effective file naming system. This approach ensures easy accessibility and location of specific data points during the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To accomplish this, I labeled and categorized data sources, such as interviews, field notes, and documents, according to a coherent organizing scheme that made sense to me as the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By creating an inventory of these data sources, I could readily access any piece of data at any point during the analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Recognizing the importance of data security and preventing any data loss, I adopted strategies recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). I stored the data in multiple secure

locations, both on a password-protected computer and in Box (required by IRB as well), a reputable and secure cloud storage platform. Additionally, during interviews, I took precautionary measures by using two audio recording devices to serve as a backup. This approach ensured that I did not risk losing any crucial audio recordings due to unexpected accidents during the interviews. During the interview with the ethnomusicology professor, an interesting incident occurred that highlights the importance of being prepared to avoid data loss. I decided to use my phone as one of the audio recording devices. However, in the excitement of the moment, I inadvertently forgot to switch my phone to airplane mode. As luck would have it, during the interview, I received an unexpected phone call that interrupted the recording. Thankfully, I used a second recording device as a backup measure so that the interview's essential insights were saved, even with the unexpected interruption.

Having organized my data files, including interview audio recordings, interview transcripts, observation forms, field notes, and other related documents, I further deidentified them to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. This thoughtful organization and labeling of data greatly facilitated my data analysis process. The ability to navigate between different data sources effortlessly enabled me to conduct a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the collected information.

Initial Reading and Reflection

After organizing the data, researchers proceed with the analysis by gaining a comprehensive understanding of the entire database (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As advised by Agar (1980) and cited in Creswell & Poth (2018, p. 187), an effective approach involves immersing oneself in the data sources. To achieve this, I diligently read through all the transcripts, field notes from observations, and other relevant documents. I also simultaneously

listened to the audio recordings of the interviews while reading through the corresponding transcripts to enhance accuracy and strengthen my connection with the transcripts. This process allowed me to develop a holistic sense of the data, appreciating the broader context and nuances present in the information before breaking it into segments and codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

During my initial reading process, I proactively engaged in a reflective practice by writing memos to capture ideas and thoughts of the data sources. Memos, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018), are concise notes consisting of short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader during the exploration of the database, and these memos are strategically written in the margins of transcripts, field notes, or other data sources, serving as aids in the initial stages of database exploration. Throughout my data analysis journey, I took care to write memos while immersing myself in the interview transcripts, field notes, and other related documents. These memos served as essential tools to keep track of the major ideas and concepts that emerged from my reading, allowing me to grasp the essence of the data in a meaningful and organized manner.

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlight, memos play a crucial role throughout the research process by facilitating reflection on the process or assisting in shaping the development of codes and themes. Even during the initial data collection process, researchers write separate memos to capture their reflections, ideas, tentative themes, and potential areas to explore further based on the initial data set (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, I wrote memos at the early stage of my research to reflect on my process. Additionally, following Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommendation, I continued to utilize the memoing strategy during each analytic session, and by revisiting the memos written during the early analysis regularly, I was able to

track the evolution of codes and themes effectively, ensuring a comprehensive and coherent analytical process.

As I progressed through my research journey, I recognized the significance of these memos beyond the analytical stage. Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlighted that memos written during the research process can be integrated as a narrative in the final report, enriching the presentation of the research findings. By actively utilizing the memoing strategy, I ensured a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the data, ultimately enhancing the depth and richness of my research outcomes.

Coding

Coding is a fundamental and pivotal aspect of qualitative research, serving as the means to make sense of the vast textual data collected from interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Coding involves the systematic process of aggregating the text or visual data into small, meaningful categories of information in which researchers seek evidence for these codes across various databases used in the study, allowing them to assign appropriate labels to each code (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). By organizing the material into manageable chunks or segments of text, coding facilitates the development of a cohesive understanding of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each segment is associated with a descriptive word or phrase, enabling researchers to establish connections and patterns within the information, and this process forms the foundation for generating overarching themes and concepts that emerge from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Numerous scholars have suggested the utility of using computer-assisted tools or programs for qualitative data analysis purposes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). However, Yin (2018) emphasized that while such

software can be valuable assistants and reliable tools, they cannot conduct the complete analysis on their own. Thus, he refers to them as "computer-assisted tools" (p.166). Unlike statistical analyses, the outputs from such software cannot be used as the conclusion of qualitative analysis; instead, researchers must carefully examine the outputs themselves to identify meaningful patterns emerging from the data (Yin, 2018). The process of developing a rich and comprehensive explanation or description of a case study, particularly in response to the initial "how" and "why" questions, demands considerable post-computer analysis and thoughtful interpretation on the part of the researcher (Yin, 2018, p.166-167).

In line with these recommendations, I utilized ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, to organize my data files, including interview transcripts, field notes, and other relevant documents. To maintain a clear and manageable analysis, I opted to manually assign codes to the valuable insights gathered from the data instead of relying on the auto-coding feature of the software. The auto-coding function had the tendency to generate an overwhelming number of codes, often assigning different codes to the same concept or vice versa, which could have resulted in confusion and inaccuracies. Following Yin's (2018) advice, I read and studied the data to gain a deep understanding of its nuances. Subsequently, I manually applied the codes, ensuring accuracy and consistency throughout the process. While I utilized the software as an organizational tool, the manual approach allowed for a more focused and insightful analysis of the data. Therefore, the software facilitated easy identification and highlighting of meaningful statements and concepts within the texts, enabling me to assign appropriate codes to different segments while also including memos during my analysis. The software was also helpful in efficiently organizing and categorizing codes and memos, allowing me to actively engage with the data in an inductive manner. I was able to seamlessly navigate between sections and various

data points to reflect, make comparisons, and establish connections between emergent ideas and insights, ultimately leading to the generation of a comprehensive set of themes. Furthermore, having the analyzed data stored within the software provided the added benefit of easy retrieval and browsing of all established categories and themes. This feature allowed me to work deductively, generating comprehensive and enhanced findings by referring to the organized data. By employing this computer-assisted tool, I maximized the efficiency and effectiveness of my qualitative data analysis process, enriching the depth of my research outcomes.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, I employed several strategies following recommendations of scholars in qualitative research.

Triangulation

First, I implemented triangulation, a powerful technique for enhancing the credibility and validity of qualitative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.260; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through triangulation, I cross-verified data from multiple sources to corroborate and validate the identified codes and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process of triangulation involved comparing and cross-checking data collected through interviews with individuals holding diverse perspectives, conducting follow-up interviews with selected participants, and documenting field notes from observations across different settings, times, and locations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, I included various documents and artifacts (i.e., course syllabi and other learning resources available on Canvas page of each ensemble) to further enrich the data.

Member Checks

The second key strategy employed was member checks, a valuable approach to ensuring the accuracy and representation of participants' perspectives and meanings (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). Recognizing the significance of understanding and presenting participants' meanings throughout the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), I applied member checks in various ways. During interviews, I took care to clarify and rephrase questions to ensure participants' comprehension and encourage thoughtful responses. Moreover, I restated some of their responses and asked for confirmation or clarification to validate the accuracy of the responses. I also conducted follow-up interviews with ensemble directors as part of the member checking process. Moreover, I maintained communication with some participants via email during data analysis to validate the accuracy of the information and findings. I also shared a draft of my findings with all the participants and checked the accuracy of the transcripts and my interpretations with them. I got six responses out of ten and revised the information according to their suggestions and clarifications.

Peer Review

Given that this research was my dissertation project, peer review played a crucial role in enhancing the trustworthiness of the study. As emphasized by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the dissertation committee serves as an inherent peer review process. Leveraging the expertise of my dissertation committee members, including my committee chair, I frequently sought their guidance and feedback on the research methods and procedures. Additionally, I shared an initial draft of my dissertation with the committee, seeking their comments, feedback, and suggestions to further refine the study.

Researcher Reflexivity

To promote transparency and provide the reader with a better understanding of potential biases and assumptions that might influence the interpretation of the data, I applied the strategy of researcher reflexivity, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). At the outset of the

research process, I critically reflected on my own experiences, biases, and assumptions, as I provided a brief overview of my personal and professional background. I also remained mindful of these factors throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

Rich, Thick Description

Lastly, I presented rich, thick description to improve the trustworthiness and transferability of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While generalizability in the statistical sense may not be applicable to qualitative research, the concept of transferability may allow for the findings to be applicable to similar contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To achieve this, I provided detailed descriptions of the research setting and participants, presented the findings with ample evidence from transcripts, field notes, and relevant documents, and included participants' direct quotes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also tried to incorporate the participants' voices as much as possible in my interpretations to ensure that the essence of their perspectives and meanings remain intact. Furthermore, by adopting a maximum variation sampling strategy in this study, the transferability of findings was further reinforced.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The findings of this study were categorized into four primary themes associated with the research questions. In the course of this research, I aimed to address the following four research questions: (a) How can the integration of music ensembles from various cultures challenge the dominance of the Eurocentric paradigm of music schools in the US? (b) How are the instructional objectives applied by the ensemble instructors different from the common music instruction and practice within Western classical music ensembles? (c) How do ensemble instructors deal with educational challenges within these ensembles? and (d) Why are students motivated to participate in these types of ensembles? The four primary themes were: (1) The integration of culturally diverse ensembles in the School of Music; (2) instructional objectives of the ensemble directors; (3) coping with instructional challenges; and (4) student experiences. Furthermore, certain subthemes within the findings were directly linked to the research questions, while others emerged from the collected data.

The Integration of Culturally Diverse Ensembles in the School of Music

Fortuitous, Circumstantial Establishment

Over the past two decades, the School of Music has made many attempts to foster diversity and cultural integration through its music ensembles. While progress has been made, changes were not as expected. Dr. John said, "[b]ut change is slow. Change is really slow. Twenty years ago, I thought things would change a lot faster." Despite this slow transformation, the school has managed to establish several musical ensembles over the years that represent a wide range of cultural traditions, including the West African drum, Old-Time, Indian, Steelpan, and Middle Eastern Ensembles. The formation of these ensembles has been a fascinating and dynamic process. Rather than following a predetermined plan, the decisions to create these

ensembles were often serendipitous and circumstantial. The key factors that influenced the establishment of these ensembles were the presence of instructors who possessed deep expertise in specific musical traditions around the School of Music and/or the availability of necessary instruments and resources.

It is important to mention first that Dr. John has had a pivotal role in establishing all of these ensembles through his ongoing dedication and efforts in recommending and advocating for these ensembles. Dr. John describes himself as a collaborator with all the ensembles he has helped establish. He takes an active role in the administrative aspects, handling the paperwork and advocating for their inclusion in the curriculum. However, he believes it is crucial that he does not teach a musical tradition unless he possesses an in-depth understanding of it. Instead, he prefers to facilitate and support experts who have deep knowledge of these traditions, allowing them to take the lead in teaching. He humbly refers to himself as a co-founder of these ensembles, recognizing the contributions of the various individuals involved in shaping and developing these ensembles.

> **Dr. John:** I like to think I'm a collaborator with all of them [ensembles]. I did the paperwork for all of them because I was familiar with how the curriculum works. I sort of advocated for them to get into the catalog and into the curriculum, and I was the one sort of talking to the dean or the director about our need to do this. I always thought it was important that unless it's a tradition that I really, really know about, then I should not be the one teaching it. I'll facilitate, and I'll be the TA, or I'll help out. But really, it should be the people that know these traditions deeply that are the ones leading them… I'm a co-founder, maybe say that, co-founder with all of these other people.

Although Dr. John possesses expertise in teaching various types of music, such as Burmese or Irish Celtic, he encountered challenges when attempting to create and lead ensembles for these traditions upon his arrival at the School of Music. The main obstacle was the lack of resources and instruments needed to establish such ensembles successfully. Instead, he shifted his focus towards finding a musical genre that could be supported by the available resources at the School. Recognizing that the School of Music already possessed a collection of West African drums, Dr. John took the opportunity to recommend and create a West African drum ensemble.

> **Dr. John:** I got here in 2002, and in the spring of 2003, the dean at that time wanted some non-canonical, some ensemble. I gave him a list of things that we could possibly do, which involved me doing either a Burmese thing, but we didn't have instruments, or an Irish Celtic thing, which I could do, or hire somebody to do West African music because we had a bunch of drums in the closet, because my predecessor, the previous ethnomusicologist, was a West African specialist. So, I actually hired somebody who had done lots of experience in West African music to start a West African drum ensemble, djembe ensemble. So that started in 2003. That was kind of the first one in 2003, then that [the ensemble] died in 2009 or 2010 with some budget cuts.

Navigating financial constraints is always complex, and not every program or initiative can be shielded from budget cuts. Dr. John recognized the vulnerability of certain areas such as this type of ensemble, such as the djembe ensemble. During that time, he passionately advocated for its continuation, firmly believing in the significance of such an ensemble for the students' educational and cultural growth. He was determined not to let it disappear without a fight, even

though he understood that there were limits to the number of battles he could wage simultaneously.

> **Dr. John:** We had the West African drum ensemble from 2003 until 2009. And then the budget cuts in 2009, came around 2010. There're only certain things that can be cut. Tenure-track positions can't be cut. Those are also very vulnerable economically. I did not want that to disappear. I was pretty mad at the time because I think we needed it. I still do. I can only make so many of these fights at the time.

The establishment of the West African drum ensemble appeared to be a unique case at the School of Music, where there was a kind of predetermined plan in place. The School recognized the potential of investing in the drums they already owned, and therefore, the School sought to hire a professional director with expertise in West African drumming, thereby laying the foundation for the ensemble from the outset. On the other hand, the formation of other ensembles from diverse cultures at the School of Music was not initially part of any specific, predetermined plan. Instead, the ideas for these ensembles arose circumstantially and fortuitously when skilled experts in various musical traditions became available within the School's community.

> **Dr. John:** For none of the ensembles, did I say: hmm, we need tradition X in the building. It was circumstantial and based on who was in the neighborhood, and who had the skills. I was not saying: we need to have an Arab Music ensemble; we need to have an Indian ensemble; we need to have an Old-Time ensemble. The Old-Time actually makes most sense because we're actually in a neighborhood where old-time music has a history. But even that, what's most important is sort of having a teacher that can do that. When [Mr. Rohan] and I met, and he lives an hour away, 45 minutes away, he wants to

teach. There's an opportunity there for our students, for him, for us, for me. Likewise

with you, you moved to town. I didn't know you beforehand. I didn't say, where am I

going to find somebody to teach a Middle Eastern ensemble? You arrived, and I thought,

aha, I need him. I quickly ran around behind the scenes and said, okay, we need to give

[him/ me] the opportunity or rather it would be a great opportunity for our students. Some

of that was [the visiting ethnomusicology professor] helped set the stage for some of that

[Middle Eastern ensemble] because [he] was here for a year, but really it was just the

randomness of you arriving here and us sort of seeing that as an opportunity to then grow.

Hence, one of the major obstacles in establishing such initiatives was the lack of qualified

teachers proficient in leading and instructing these unique ensembles holding formal degrees in

these specific fields. Dr. John emphasized that exploring non-canonical music, such as old-time

fiddle, often did not align with the prevailing academic trajectory, as some of these musical

forms lacked formal degrees or accreditations.

> **Dr. John:** If you want to sort of explore non-canonical music, a lot of non-canonical
>
> music don't have degrees attached to them. You cannot get a DMA in old-time fiddle.

This posed a dilemma for universities, which typically require a certain number of faculty with

degrees to maintain accreditation. Dr. Llanzo echoed this sentiment, acknowledging that certain

specialized musical traditions, like steelpan, might not always have teachers with formal degrees

in the field. He acknowledged that in some cases having experienced individuals who grew up

with the music tradition could offer a more effective and practical teaching approach than

someone with a music degree but limited knowledge of the specific practical and cultural

context.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** For universities to remain accredited, they have to have a certain number of people with degrees… It is tricky because there are lots of places where the steelpan teacher doesn't have a steelpan degree necessarily, and it's hard to get one that they're very rare. In other ways, I would prefer for somebody who grew up with steelpan to teach it than for somebody with a percussion degree who didn't really grow up on steelpan to teach it because that also happens too. You have people with a music degree teaching steelpan, but they don't really know anything about steelpan. (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo pointed out that, on the other hand, some individuals without a music degree may struggle to teach due to a lack of pedagogical skills, leading to potential challenges. Therefore, he emphasized that the approach to evaluating potential instructors for this type of ensembles within university settings should be based on a comprehensive assessment of their teaching abilities, depth of knowledge in the particular musical tradition, and an understanding of the historical and cultural context.

> **Dr. Llanzo**: The truth is sometimes people who don't have any music degree are not really sure about how to teach, and that causes trouble too because it's not an effective approach. It depends. You have to really evaluate people based on their abilities to teach and their knowledge on the steelpan. The knowledge of the historical, social, and cultural context of the steelpan is important too if you're going to teach in a university, but maybe you don't necessarily need a degree. I'd be open if somebody doesn't have a degree teaching it. (First interview)

Therefore, when Dr. John and the School administration discovered the presence of individuals possessing the required knowledge and skills, they recognized this as a valuable opportunity and made a strategic decision to invest in these ensembles.

A new ethnomusicologist professor joined the School of Music in 2007 and later founded

the Old-Time Ensemble in 2008, aiming to create a space dedicated to one of the State's music

traditions, which was an area previously underrepresented in the School. The ensemble was

humble as it started as a relatively small gathering of musicians. However, its potential for

expansion was evident, and it quickly gained popularity among students and musicians alike.

> **Dr. John:** Then in 2007, we hired a second ethnomusicologist because ethnomusicology
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> was growing, and there were a lot of students. He started the Old-Time Ensemble. I did
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> all the paperwork because I was familiar with how the curriculum works. It was 2008 that
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> the Old-Time Ensemble started... It was pretty small, and that quickly grew. Then [Dr.
>
> Cecilia] took it over.
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> **Dr. Cecilia:** I was in it the very first semester that started. The old director, [former
>
> instructor], the founder of the ensemble wanted an ensemble that focused on oral tradition
>
> music from [the State] because that wasn't really functionally happening in the School of
>
> Music when he came to [the University]. He started this class, and I needed one more
>
> credit to keep my assistantship hours, so oh, I'll take this fiddling class. It'll be easy and
>
> fun. I joined it, and there were eight people in the class. Most of us were graduate
>
> students. Then it just grew, and grew, and grew, and grew, and it started in the Spring
>
> semester of 2008. (First interview)

The Old-Time Ensemble had a unique teaching dynamic that allowed Dr. Cecilia to immerse

herself deeply in the old-time music genre and its associated techniques. Even as a student in the

ensemble, Dr. Cecilia's passion and expertise in old-time fiddling techniques became evident,

prompting the former director to entrust her with teaching parts of the class, long before she

officially became the solo instructor. When the former director expressed his desire to step back

from leading the Old-Time Ensemble, he confidently recommended Cecilia as his successor. His recommendation was met with approval from the School administration, solidifying Cecilia's role as the sole instructor of the Old-Time Ensemble.

> **Dr. Cecilia:** It's the funny thing though in Old-Time Ensemble; everybody is the teacher. When I was a student in the Old-Time Ensemble, the old director of the ensemble was not a fiddle player or a banjo player. He played the accordion and the guitar, so he couldn't really help the fiddle players to do fiddle things. Once I started really digging deep into old-time fiddling techniques, he basically said all right, I'm gonna send all the fiddle players with you from now on. He kind of helped to cultivate that leadership. I was teaching parts of the class for years before I was actually the instructor of record. Then, there was a semester where there were like 35 people or so in Old-Time Ensemble, and the old director was like, that's too many people for one section; we need two sections. He basically told the dean, you're gonna hire [Cecilia] to lead the other section of the class because this class is not conducive to having that many people in one space. He taught one section of it. I taught the other section of it, and we combined for our performances... [The former director] wanted to start another sort of participatory ensemble...and he wanted to step back from being in charge of the Old-Time Ensemble. I was finishing my PhD... that would have been the Spring of 2016...and again, it was [the former director] saying, I'm going to take a step back from this, and they were like, well, who's going to teach the class? He said, [Cecilia] should teach it... and they asked me if I would stay on as the solo instructor of record, and I said, yes, absolutely! (First interview)

With the seamless transition and the continuity of Dr. Cecilia's leadership and enthusiastic commitment, the Old-Time Ensemble continued to thrive and flourish even after the departure of the former director.

In 2015, the seeds of establishing an Indian Ensemble began to take roots when Dr. John met Mr. Rohan. Then the idea of bringing Indian music to the university became a reality when Dr. John and Mr. Rohan collaborated and started the Indian Music Ensemble at the School of Music in 2017. They received support from the former director of the School of Music, and this Ensemble became the only place in the State among other universities where Indian music is being taught.

> **Dr. John:** I met [Mr. Rohan] in 2015, and I invited him here to play a recital. He had students in his home in [his city]. Then, it was in 2017 that we started the ensemble here. Yeah, 2017, I think fall of 2017.
>
> **Mr. Rohan:** I came to [the University], and that's why I started teaching over here [the US]. Before teaching at [the University], I was teaching at home. Then, I came in contact with [Dr. John], and we all thought about the idea of bringing Indian music to the University. Coincidentally, this is the only university... This is the only place in [the State] amongst all the [State's Universities] where Indian music is been taught so that this ensemble is the only place. [The former School of Music director] was there. He supported us at that point, and it has worked out very well. (First interview)

However, when Mr. Rohan started teaching at the university, he faced challenges in getting his Indian qualifications and credentials recognized. Having studied extensively under his guru for 30 years, Mr. Rohan lacked formal documentation to prove his expertise. Regardless of the lack of formal paperwork, Mr. Rohan's abilities and reputation as a skilled musician were well-

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known, having performed live concerts at the university before joining the School. His qualifications were assessed based on his practical expertise and the recognition of experts in the field, rather than solely relying on formal degrees.

> **Mr. Rohan:** After 30 years of learning from my guru, which I think is the highest education I have, I don't have a piece of paper to show it to anybody. All I can say is that I'll sit in front of you with my Sarod, and you listen, and then you decide whether in your entire University, can anybody play what I am playing on my Sarod?... So yes, there were several qualities which were considered. But at that point, I think that the University had several people who had heard me live in concerts before I even came to the University. I had even performed in concerts at [the University] before I was hired by the University. They knew my abilities. Then, they knew from the people who were experts in this area that yes, this person is qualified enough in this particular form of art... Those were several characteristics which they considered, but it cannot be just on the basis of a piece of paper... Currently, I have a Master's in Music Education [from the US], but they know that I do not use that Master's in Music Education to teach my class. It's a different form of art. (First interview)

Interestingly, it took three years for the University to process and acknowledge Mr. Rohan's qualifications, during which Dr. John acted as the instructor of record for the Indian Ensemble. Despite this administrative hurdle, Dr. John acknowledged Mr. Rohan's expertise and in-depth knowledge of the tradition. He believed that Mr. Rohan's abilities as a musician spoke for themselves and that a piece of paper could not fully represent the depth of his talent and skill.

> **Dr. John:** For [Mr. Rohan], for example, he was trained in a Gharana, a lineage of musicians for many generations. His degree is in computer science. He also has a three-

year degree in *Tabla*, but his bachelor's degree was in computer science... It was all in

India. When [Mr. Rohan] started teaching here and he needed to be credentialed, because

everybody that's going to be instructor of record, unless they're a graduate assistant,

needs to prove to the University that they have the paperwork, and all of his were in

India. It took us three years to process that. In that time, I was the instructor of record for

the India class, and he's the expert; he knows the tradition. You know, I know this much

[little/made a small space between his hands]. He knows this much [a lot/made a large

space between his hands]. I shouldn't be teaching it. I'll help out in the background, or

I'll do the administration, but it [the music degree] made no bearing on his ability to

teach the class.

Ultimately, the Indian Music Ensemble flourished under Mr. Rohan's guidance, and the

university's decision to value expertise and practical skills over formal paperwork facilitated

success in nurturing a vibrant and genuine musical experience.

In Spring 2019, the Steelpan Ensemble was established at the School of Music, but again,

it was not a result of any predetermined plan. Initially, the School sought to hire an

ethnomusicology professor. The primary focus in the hiring procedure was to find someone to

teach mostly ethnomusicology courses, and the idea of creating a steelpan ensemble was not part

of the job advertisement. However, among the applicants for this position, Dr. Llanzo stood out

as an exceptional candidate with the remarkable ability to run a steelpan ensemble.

Coincidentally, the School already possessed a set of steelpan instruments, although they had not

been organized into a dedicated steelpan ensemble and were instead used within the percussion

ensemble. The presence of these instruments, combined with Dr. Llanzo's impressive experience

in teaching and leading steelpan ensembles, presented a unique opportunity that the School administration recognized.

> **Dr. John:** When we were hiring [Dr. Llanzo], we want these [made a large space between his hands] qualifications [in teaching ethnomusicology courses], and the ability to run an ensemble was one of those things that we'd like. It wasn't necessary for the job, but something that we'd like, and we could build with that... We chose [Dr. Llanzo] not so much for the steelpan, but for his other qualities. Then, the steelpan came out of that because he had training in that, and the fact that he does pan Caribbean work, works in Africa, and then also has this Caribbean tradition. He had a whole bunch of qualities that were useful, but it wasn't so much about, we need a steelpan that drove that.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I was hired as an ethnomusicologist to teach ethnomusicology classes, more big classes and seminars. Because I have the skills to also direct an ensemble, and they [the School] already had the steelpans here... I wasn't really hired to teach the steelpan. That wasn't the ad. The job description didn't even have that in there. It's just that they had it [steelpan instruments], and it was a good opportunity to hire me to teach ethnomusicology courses and the Steelpan Ensemble. They got a lot of things in one person... For some reason, somebody decided to buy a whole set of steelpans, but they didn't have a steelpan ensemble per se. The percussion students would play the steelpans as part of the percussion ensemble. If you wanted to play the steelpan, you had to register in the percussion ensemble, but you would play the steelpan and other instruments. I started the first Steelpan Ensemble that was just steelpan, separate from the percussion ensemble. (First interview)

The decision to hire Dr. Llanzo meant that the School of Music could offer ethnomusicology courses enriched by his expertise and, simultaneously, establish a dedicated Steelpan Ensemble under his capable leadership. The presence of Dr. Llanzo allowed for the creation of a dedicated Steelpan Ensemble, separate from the percussion ensemble, providing students with a focused and comprehensive learning experience centered around the steelpan instruments.

Ensembles' Significance

Regardless of the serendipitous circumstances of the establishment of the aforementioned ensembles, the presence of expert instructors within the School's community and the availability of resources (for some ensembles) led to the creation of enriching musical experiences. The significance of the integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures at the School of Music has become increasingly apparent despite their circumstantial beginnings. As Dr. John passionately, and continuously has been advocating for that within the School of Music, he emphasized the multitude of benefits these ensembles could offer. Dr. John articulated several reasons why these ensembles were brought to the School of Music, and he highlighted how these ensembles could offer diverse perspectives on music, expand student musical skills, and foster cultural awareness and understanding.

One crucial reason for the integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures is to expose students to the realization that there are various ways of approaching and understanding music so that all types of music should be equally valued. Dr. John illustrated that the world of music is diverse, and assuming that one's own musical experience represents the entirety of music is a limiting perspective. Drawing an analogy to the English department, Dr. John emphasized that just as they study one language among many, the School of Music should recognize that it primarily concentrates on one form of music while disregarding most others.

This approach is unfair and limits students' perspectives. Thus, the School of Music should recognize and embrace the multitude of musical traditions present globally to expand students' perspectives.

> **Dr. John:** It's important for a number of reasons. It's important for music students to know that there's different ways of doing and thinking about music. That's probably the biggest one right there. The world is diverse, and to assume that your music is music, I think is a real injustice. We are no more a school of music than the English department is a school of language. Right? There's many, many, many, many languages out there. The English department would not claim that they do language. They do English. They do one of those languages… We claim we do music, yet we ignore most musics. We don't, and it's only in small spots of the curriculum where we actually push students to realize that there's a whole other world out there.

Ian shared a similar perspective to Dr. John regarding how the School of Music should put equal emphasis on all types of music because they all represent valuable forms of music, especially since the School identifies itself as a "School of music."

> **Ian:** I think if a school of music wants to call itself a school of music, and not a school of classical music, they should include other types of music. If a school wants to be a school of classical music, they should say that. If they don't want to include other types of music, they should just put like, [the University] School of Classical Music up there. But since they call themselves [the University] School of Music, I think that more emphasis could be put on world ensembles because they are equally music.

Max, echoing similar opinions, expressed concern about limiting music education to just one style, particularly in the context of teaching music theory rooted in the Common Practice era. He

found it limiting to conform strictly to established rules and harmony structures, which may hinder students' creative expression in composition.

> **Max:** I mean, it's called the School of Music, right? If we're only focusing on one style of music, I think that at minimum is just doing a disservice to music itself, and also to your students. I try not to knock. I try not to disparage Western classical music because there's a lot of really incredible music there… I think if we're teaching music theory and we're really focused on what they call the Common Practice era of, like, Bach, where harmony only functions in that particular way, but then they ask you to compose something, and if you don't follow these strict rules, it's, like, wrong! It's really frustrating to me!

Secondly, Dr. John pointed out that these ensembles offer valuable skill-building opportunities for students beyond their immediate musical domain. Working with various musical traditions and tonal systems, learning to play music by ear, engaging in improvisation, and developing a critical ear for different musical nuances are all essential aspects that emerge from participating in such ensembles. These skills complement prevailing music education models like band, choir, and orchestra and contribute to shaping well-rounded and versatile musicians.

> **Dr. John:** Secondarily, I think it gives students skills that they actually might use in their other music domains. It helps their ear training. If they're working on a *maqam*, then they have to sort of tighten up what it means to listen in a different way. If they're learning things by ear, that's a big, a pretty big important skill set for musicians wherever you are on the planet that we don't do a lot of. Some of our ensembles do oral traditions, do music by ear. There's some ensembles that sort of do improvisation. Where do you learn

improvisation unless you take an improvisation class? There's a bunch of musical skills

that show up in some of these ensembles in different ways than they do in the band,

choir, and orchestra model… It helps make good, better musicians too; better thinkers of

music because you understand what is normative and what your biases are. If you think

music is this thing, and suddenly, you're exposed to this, and then suddenly, oh, okay,

music is more complicated than that.

Thus, these ensembles broaden the horizons of music students, exposing them to different ways

of doing and thinking about music beyond what they may be familiar with.

Furthermore, Dr. John stressed the inseparable connection between music and culture. He

mentioned that music is inherently embedded in cultural contexts, and the act of making music in

these ensembles inevitably involves embracing different ways of behavior, movement, and

ideologies associated with those cultures. Cultural learning is an integral part of the musical

experience of these ensembles, and the appreciation of musical expressions is intricately tied to

understanding the cultural significance behind them.

Dr. John: Every ensemble deals with that piece [culture] a little bit differently, although

simply the act of music making has a cultural component that might be organized a little

bit differently than other ensembles in the building. In the Indian Ensemble, you're going

to take your shoes off and sit down on the floor before there's any note played, right? Just

simply the act of making music in a new culture sort of forces you into a different way of

moving your body, a different way of behaving, a different sort of ideologies or

expectations.

Dr. John believes that music and culture as inseparable, rejecting the notion of isolating musical

aspects from their cultural roots.

Dr. John: Your question about what about the cultural learnings? I don't think music is this thing that's separate from culture, so we can talk about the musical things independent of the culture things. Without culture, there is no music. It doesn't mean anything. Whenever we call music, it's thoroughly embedded in ideas of what counts as an appropriate way to put music together? What counts as in tune? What counts as beautiful or ugly? What counts as the way you're supposed to hold the instrument or dress or whatever? It's all cultural, all of it. There is no music, it's all culture!

Dr. John emphasized that music encompasses a vast spectrum of cultural elements, ranging from specific techniques, practices, and tunings to performance protocols, dress codes, and religious connections.

Dr. John: So again, whether we're talking about specific musical techniques or practices or tunings, or whether we're talking about dress or performance protocols and how you're supposed to engage, or whether we're talking about the transmission system, whether it's on paper or through, or whether we're talking about how it fits into society, or whether it's connected to religious traditions, you know, it's all music and culture combined.

Alice and Ian also echoed a similar belief to Dr. John, as their perspective reflected the inseparable bond between culture and music.

Alice: I cannot separate those two words in my mind. All of it was cultural, and all of it was musical, even the setting up the room, even the practicing even, everything from the beginning to the end of that class was part of the cultural and musical experience to me.

Ian: The culture surrounding the music is equally as important as the music itself, especially in something like old-time where you could say that the culture of old-time

music is playing- is just being in a community and playing together. I guess it's like they're the same thing in a lot of ways. The culture and the playing of the music are the same thing.

Dr. John asserted that these ensembles offer an immersive and holistic understanding of music as an inseparable facet of culture, challenging students to broaden their perspectives on musical expression and its significance within different contexts.

Dr. John: So ultimately, this is about the goal of these ensembles… [which] is to tell people to teach students that there are ways of doing things that are different from what you're doing. There're other ways to be in the world. Musically and otherwise…musically, linguistically, bodily, whatever, it's all. I wouldn't necessarily separate those into two separate questions. One about the music and one about the culture because it's the same thing. It's the same thing to me…to me, this is my opinion… Ultimately, the bigger goal is about cultural awareness…Tuning… getting the way people tune their instrument, is a way of doing that. Getting at the way people hold their instrument, or the way they sit on the floor is a way of doing that.

Therefore, the overarching goal of bringing these ensembles to the School of Music is to cultivate cultural awareness among students. Understanding and appreciating diverse musical expressions, including their cultural underpinnings, fosters a more inclusive and enriched musical community. As students explore various musical traditions, they learn to appreciate alternative ways of existing in the world—musically, culturally, socially, and beyond. In essence, the integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures at the School of Music offers powerful platforms for broadening the cultural and musical horizons of students and fostering a deeper appreciation for rich human musical expressions and engagement.

Challenging the System

In alignment with Dr. John's insights on the significance of these ensembles and the reasons behind their establishment at the School of Music, the ensemble directors share similar visions and offer further perspectives on how these musical groups can challenge the Eurocentric paradigm of the School system. These ensembles could challenge the prevailing norms of the School by promoting diverse ways of music-making and thinking about music, problematizing conventional practices, and simply by their existence.

Dr. Llanzo noted that emphasizing the process over the final outcome challenges the conventional notion that music is solely a product meant to be performed to a specific standard. Instead, his ensemble can challenge this common perspective through the way in which he teaches the class, and the way in which his ensemble prioritizes experiential learning, fostering a deeper connection with the music, its history, and its cultural significance.

Dr. Llanzo: Let's say how I conduct rehearsals. We don't have scores, necessarily. Students teach each other. We spend time learning to play together and feel the groove together. I don't know if anyone else does that, but there's less of a focus on the music as a product and more about the process. What are we learning? We're learning something new, but especially the idea is that we're not focused on reading and trying to learn as much repertoire as possible. I'm not focused on trying to get a whole concert together or get sufficient repertoire. If we only learn one song, then I'm okay with that because it's more about the process. We're getting people to play together and understand what we're doing, understand some of the history of it and the culture associated with steelpan. In that way, it can challenge this idea that music is the product and that you have to perform

106

it to a particular standard at the end. I think that's a big part of it, just the orality of it all.

(First interview)

Dr. Cecilia's teaching approach in the Old-Time Ensemble further reinforced the significance of the pedagogy of these ensembles in encouraging students to explore and engage with music beyond the boundaries of the Western music canon.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I would say, the pedagogy of collectivity and all being in the same space together, all teaching and learning together... I would say the majority of my students this semester accomplished what I hoped for, which is that they come away with some more experience learning music by ear, arranging music, part of the like creative process of being in music outside of the Western art music tradition. (Follow up interview)

Mr. Rohan's teaching philosophy also embodied a distinctive approach to teaching music, particularly when compared to Western music practices.

> **Mr. Rohan:** I am diverse because I have a different way of thinking in my teaching, like I feel that music should be sung, right? Singing is the base of everything. It should not be read and played. It should be remembered and played. There should be improvisation. It's not a bookish knowledge! It is an oral tradition. These are the things which make me diverse, and these are the things perhaps were considered at the time of hiring me as a teacher at [the University]. (Follow up interview)

By nurturing an environment where students collectively learn and grow together, experience diverse and distinctive teaching and learning approaches, and explore multiple perspectives on music and its culture, these ensembles cultivate a space where students become well-rounded musicians, ready to embrace the richness of music exceeding the Western classical canon. Dr. Cecilia expressed her optimism about the positive direction in music education. She

107

emphasized the importance of exposing students to a wide range of musical styles and genres beyond the traditional Western art music canon.

> **Dr. Cecilia:** I think we're moving in the right direction, music education-wise, making sure that students are exposed to lots of different styles and genres, so students are becoming more well versed in things outside of the Western art music canon. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan shared his concerns about the lack of emphasis and promotion given to his ensemble within the School of Music and assumed that was because some of his teaching perspectives might challenge the system and come into conflict with some of the prevailing norms of the School. He felt that some faculty members may view some of his teaching practices as a "threat" to some of the teaching and learning process of Western classical music because he problematizes in his class some conventional practices such as conducting and reading music notation while performing. He believes that students should take ownership of their performances without constant direction from a conductor or reliance on sheet music. He argued that relying on sheet music during performances is akin to "cheating," and performance must be centered toward more student-led and autonomous musical performance.

> **Mr. Rohan:** Just as I told you, we discussed earlier that they are used to reading and performing. Then, they are used to conducting. Who looks at the conductor? I have never understood that concept even after doing the conducting class. I challenge and I ask questions. As an educator, we should be asking questions not accepting everything which is given to us. Think about a current system in which a conductor has a stick in his hand and says, *tah-kee* , *tah-kee* , *tah-kee,* whatever does all those things. I don't know whether it is about acting or what it is. They are supposed to, if you have taught properly, why do

you need to be on stage and tell everybody what to do? After that, they are reading from a book. They are not looking at the conductor all the time. Yes, they will be slightly here and there. But the concept, the question is very simple. If you are training your child properly, you don't have to be on stage. My students, they perform all alone on stage. I am not there. Mistakes are fine. I am not against mistakes. We all make mistakes. Mistakes are okay. Cheating is bad. When you have that piece of paper in front of you, that is cheating. Okay, so that is a concept. I know people may not agree with it. It's fine. That's what we agree to disagree also, but I have to be myself when I give this interview, right? It gives me an opportunity to pass on with my name on it. I don't have anything to hide. (First interview)

Therefore, Mr. Rohan indicated that these differences in his teaching practices and music concepts could be perceived as challenging established teaching norms, causing some hesitation among faculty to promote the Indian Ensemble for their students. The lack of promotion from music faculty might play a part in the low enrolment issue in the Indian Ensemble.

Mr. Rohan: Today, we are discussing enrollment issues, right? Because not too many people are coming as we would have expected... [The Indian Ensemble] It's not advertised as much as the other things. I don't see Western classical as a threat, but Western classical may be seeing this [some of the teaching practices within the Indian Ensemble] as a threat to them. These are strong words. Okay, I know, but think about it that way. After knowing the potential of this thing [Indian Ensemble], why are not many people [supporting]? Yes, [Dr. John] is enormously helpful, but how many other people are enormously helpful at the University? Think about it. It's not that they would say that, okay, we have 40 people in my violin class. Out of that, why don't you ensure that you

109

tell them that, okay, you need to learn this also [Indian music]? This is the oral way of

learning, right? Oral tradition. Why don't you encourage that? Instead, you are just

thinking that, okay, my student goes there [to the Indian Ensemble] and he [Mr. Rohan]

will say, that reading a page is cheating, which I will say. Okay, I will. Not I may, I will.

Now, they feel that [the teaching] is a threat to that existing form of learning. That is why

I think that not many people are giving this music [Indian] the emphasis which they

should be giving. Not many are open to that, yes, we will give the exposure to our

students so that they can learn different forms of music. Yes, [the School of Music

director] is supportive. [Dr. John] is supportive, but I'm not too sure whether other people

are that much because there are some concepts which are entirely different, like I said

something about conducting, right? Those concepts are different. I said something about

reading and playing music. That's a different concept. They think that this is a threat to

their existing form of teaching and learning. (First interview)

However, Mr. Rohan stressed that his intention is not to be a threat to the existing teaching style

at the School, but rather to coexist harmoniously within the larger framework, which is

predominantly Western. Mr. Rohan told a story of how a small spoon of sugar would not

negatively impact a cup of milk, but it will increase its sweetness. He considered the Indian

Ensembles as a spoon of sugar, while the School as it largely holds a Western music perspective

as a cup of milk. Mr. Rohan clarified that his stance against using some teaching and learning

strategies doesn't imply that these strategies are wrong. It's more a matter of adhering to his own

teaching philosophy and his identity as a teacher. He assumed that conflicts might arise when

students start to question the conventional methods they have been exposed to for decades. Thus,

students might start to demand change, and change often faces resistance. Despite potential

challenges, Mr. Rohan feels that if his ensemble gets more support and promotion from the music faculty, it can grow and flourish.

> **Mr. Rohan:** I am not competing with anybody, nor I am letting some things down or some people down, but this is what I have been taught. This is who I am. These are my values. I will not allow my students to read and perform. This is a cultural trait that it's not against somebody, but some people think that this is as a threat to their existing thing [teaching]. They have been teaching back and before and for years and years. Change always has a resistance. That is what seems to be happening at a certain point. That's why they are not opening up this to other students... We are not going to be a threat to anybody's way of teaching. We are going to blend in with the existing Western part, which is 99%. We will be just the 1% of "sugar." That is what we want to be, but allow us to be there. Give us the opportunity or give your students that opportunity to come here and learn music through the oral tradition. Leave them or give them an opportunity to be away from that piece of paper in front of them. Let the music flow from the heart. That is what we want to happen. . . A piece of paper is not right for me. Then, it becomes a contradictory thing for them. I have not said that what other forms of music are doing are wrong. In my form of music, this will not be permitted. That is what I have said. Now, they realize that students will realize that this may be the right way to learn. In that case, the students will question their existing way of teaching which is going on since several decades. Why are things not changing? All those things will come up, but that should not be preventing me from expanding this program. I cannot expand this program just alone. I need support from other people. (Follow up interview)

Interestingly, Dr. Cecilia shared an example of a conflict that occurred between her and the vocal faculty due to the singing style in her ensemble. That conflict arose because the singing techniques that she teaches in the Old-Time Ensemble might contrast with some of the operatic singing styles, which the vocal faculty expressed concerns about.

>**Dr. Cecilia:** I'm genuinely trying to think of like a time when one of the string faculty has approached me and said, hey, that stuff you're teaching in Old-Time Ensemble is messing with my students and that has never happened. The place where I think that has not from the string faculty but from vocal faculty. That is the place where I see more of that happening because they're very, very concerned about the ranges of the vocal ranges that are used in traditional music and the perception of belting. That goes to I'm not that kind of singer or so. I'm l the belter, so I can't speak to all of the technical things that happen in the human body to make a beautiful operatic tone or stuff like that. The only times where there has been anything like that has been with vocal faculty, and it really was only once or twice about whether you should sing with vibrato or straight tone or the vocal ranges being stressful on students. (First interview)

I personally had one incident in this context when a vocal faculty member contacted Dr. John concerning the grade of one of my voice students in the Middle Eastern Ensemble. The student consistently used operatic singing techniques despite being taught the Arabic singing style for three semesters. I repeatedly provided feedback to her, urging her not to use operatic techniques as they were not appropriate for our music and didn't align with the ensemble's goals. She preferred using them because they were easier for her although she knew the difference between these two styles and how to apply them. However, she persisted in singing in the operatic style during the rehearsals and even during our concert, misrepresenting the music, which resulted in a

112

fairly low grade for her in the class and led to conflicts with other faculty at the School. Drawing from this example and reflecting on what the ensemble directors expressed, I can imagine how ensemble directors might sometimes face challenges when attempting to introduce students to various music perspectives. I can infer that in conservative music settings, students may have been taught a specific "right" way to approach music. Therefore, when directors try to engage their students with alternative perspectives, that engagement might create direct conflicts and resistance among students or other teachers who are accustomed to a more conservative approach.

Dr. Cecilia presented an additional perspective on how these ensembles could challenge the system, which is simply by their "existence" at the School. While there might have been concerns in the past about these ensembles, she considered that they are now viewed as a "positive challenge" rather than a "threat." She deemed these ensembles as an opportunity for improvement and inclusivity of the School. Dr. Cecilia also emphasized that these ensembles do not devalue Western art music but instead invite others to embrace different perspectives and musical practices. The presence of these ensembles at the School serves as an invitation for everyone to challenge and explore music in diverse ways.

> **Dr. Cecilia:** How do we challenge? I mean, just by existing. I think we challenge that because there's an entire galaxy of music that exists... But, I don't think it's seen as a threat anymore. I think it's a challenge, but I think it's more of an improvement in that sense as an invitation to how can you challenge in this same way? I don't think it's oppositional. It may have been many years ago, but I was in the clouds of like I love doing this thing, and I was also a student... I would just invite people to think about our existence as an ensemble is not a threat to anybody else's ways that they engage with

113

music. I love playing orchestral music. I have had incredible transformative experiences playing classical Western art music. It's the background I come from. There's nothing wrong with it, but there's also nothing wrong with these other things, and to imply that there is because it's not Western art music, I think does students a disservice. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia appreciated how the School of Music took such initiatives in increasing the types of ensembles that coexist harmoniously in one place.

Dr. Cecilia: I think what we are trying to do at [the University] and what I see a lot of our sister institutions doing as far as, yes we have wind ensemble...symphony orchestra...jazz… the things that everybody kind of has in higher ed music now. Everybody has those big three things, but that we also have American music... Middle Eastern Ensemble... Indian Ensemble... Steelpan... a Gospel Choir... We have all of these different ways of engaging with music and they are all in the same space, fairly happily coexisting! (First interview)

Dr. John also confirmed that having all of these ensembles along with other various types of music-making in the music building is encouraging in challenging the School structure.

Dr. John: In addition to the four ensembles that we're talking about, there's also the improvisation ensemble, the jazz ensembles. There're other non-canonical ensembles. There's the band, the orchestra, and the choir, and then there's the pop tech stuff… the songwriting class… the improvisation class, or there's other sorts of things. Then, there's the four ensembles that we're talking about. There's more. There're people in the building that are trying to do different types of music and different ways of thinking about music that are challenging this paradigm as well.

114

Hence, the existence of all of these ensembles in one place provides students with numerous, smooth ways to engage with music and foster a rich, diverse musical milieu.

Additionally, Dr. Cecilia highlighted that the existence of these ensembles not only makes improvement in the current system within the School of Music but also extends its impact to public schools, promoting culturally responsive teaching. She also acknowledged, again, that limiting students to a narrow range of music does them a disservice and hinders their ability to be culturally responsive in their teaching. Dr. Cecilia emphasized the importance of exposing pre-service music educators to diverse musical experiences beyond the Western music canon. Thus, she stressed that these ensembles contribute to a more inclusive and culturally responsive music education.

> **Dr. Cecilia:** To train especially young teachers to live only in a musical world that exists from 1600 to, let's say like 1920 and being rooted in that Western art music large ensemble canon does a big disservice to especially pre-service music educators. For us as institutions, I'm a music educator. When I look at students who are coming out into the schools to be interning student teaching preparing to go out and get jobs in classrooms for them to be so woefully unprepared to discuss anything other than Western art music is very short sighted. It's not culturally responsive to the students that we teach every single day… If we want to tell our pre-service music educators, you have to be culturally responsive, [then] you have to be inclusive; you have to have X, Y, and Z methods to include every child; differentiate the levels at which you're going to be engaging with these students. Why do we have a one size fits all approach in higher education? That to me shuts the door on a lot of people… I think it has gotten so much better, so different in [the University] even from the time that I've been a student at [the University], which is

115

like 2006 I started as a master student. There's a lot more inclusion. There is a lot more sort of like critical reflection on who are we preparing, who are we admitting into our institutions to even deem worthy of training. I would love to see more people coming into our music education program with diversity of music learning experience. Most of them are going to come in string players, and they will have like gone to their all county and taken private lessons and been all state level violinists or whatever, which is great. But where's all the other stuff? Where's all the blues fiddle players? Where's all these other folks who have various experiences with music that would position them really well to be music educators? I think just us existing in that way is a challenge to that system.

Ian supported this idea, stating that exposure to various music ensembles helps create well-rounded musicians and music educators who are culturally responsive. Thus, he suggested that music education majors should be required to take more diverse ensemble experiences.

Ian: I think that the world ensembles are super important in making a good musician. I think making a good music educator if we want to talk about culturally responsive music teaching and everything. If you're only ever exposed to one culture, you can't help to be culturally responsive in your teaching. I think for music educators, music ed majors specifically, I think that more we should be required to take these. I can't speak on performance majors, but I think for us we should be required to take more of these than we are currently required to.

Alice confirmed this view, emphasizing the benefits of diverse instructional methods and how they can relate to varied students' backgrounds. She shared her appreciative feeling when she joined the Old-Time Ensemble as it was culturally responsive for her, fostering a sense of belonging and comfort.

116

Alice: I think that it's extremely beneficial partially because of the different instructional methods that we just talked about, also because of the oral music making. I think it's important to remember that these kinds of ensembles may be new to some students, but they may also be culturally responsive for other students, like for me. I got to Old-Time and most people in there were really out of their element, but I was finally for the first time ever in my life in my element in school. As far as culturally responsive teaching, these might be a tool for that. And then just to, in general, diversify the types of music, the types of music making, the types of learning, all of that, I think that they really helped to do that.

By offering a wide range of ensembles and musical experiences, the School of Music can better prepare future music educators with various instructional methods to engage with diverse student populations and be culturally responsive teachers.

Furthermore, the existence of these ensembles would contribute to enhancing the diversity of the student body within the School of Music and promoting greater demographic representation. Currently, the School of Music exhibits a predominantly White demographic across various aspects such as administration, faculty members, and student body, which differs from the demographic makeup of the University's other academic units on campus. The idea of eliminating auditions for these ensembles and making them open to anyone, regardless of their musical and cultural background and identities, encouraged numerous students from varying backgrounds to join these ensembles. In other words, these ensembles could hold the potential of enriching the School of Music demographics by increasing the presence of students from various communities, including old-time music, Caribbean, Indian, and others. Dr. Cecilia discussed her observations regarding this critical issue of diversity at the School of Music. She was able to

117

recognize how her ensemble has become over time more reflective of the broader campus student body, both in terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as gender identities. Dr. Cecilia expressed her satisfaction with the progress made in terms of diversity, and she takes pride in the Old-Time Ensemble being a place where students feel comfortable and safe expressing their selves. She emphasized that she will be committed to maintaining a safe and inclusive space, fostering diversity and inclusivity within her ensemble.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I remember the first time that I looked at the Old-Time Ensemble when I was the director, then I looked at the Old-Time Ensemble now and was like our ensemble actually finally looks like the rest of our campus, not like the School of Music because the School of Music is like a very White European space. It feels that when I'm there [at the School of Music], the majority of the people I'm interacting with are people who are like a White European descent, but that's not what most of our campus looks like. So, knowing that, I have black Americans in my class... I have Latinx students... I would love to have a day like those days where you look in the Old-Time Ensemble and you do really just see a cross-section of the campus. Are we still like the majority of White identifying Europeans in that class? Yes, we are. Do I see it moving in a direction that is more inclusive? Yes, and specifically not just with ethnic and racial backgrounds but gender identities. I'm very, very, very proud that Old-Time Ensemble is a place where students cannot be afraid to be seen as their whole selves. Yeah, it's, I will do anything to make sure that that space remains safe for anybody who wants to be in it.... I would want to continue to see the Old-Time Ensembles continue to be diverse, continue to be more diverse. As long as I'm at the helm of it, I'm going to work to make sure that happens. (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo also sought to involve Caribbean students in the Steelpan Ensemble, and he

highlighted how his ensemble has become a platform for Caribbean students in and out of the

University who joined the ensemble because they wanted to connect with their cultural heritage

through music. Thus, the Steelpan Ensemble would help bringing more Caribbean students to the

School of Music.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** This semester, there is somebody from the Caribbean, and she joined
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> because I reached out to an organization on campus, Students of Caribbean Ancestry...
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> She joined because she wants to play steelpan here. She's not a music major, so she
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> joined because of that, which is great. I want Caribbean students in the class. I think
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> there's a potential for more. It's just that I only recently started to reach out to the
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> organization... Another student before, she joined it because her parents are Trinidadian
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> and she never got a chance to play, so this was an opportunity for her to play. There was
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> another student who wasn't at [the University], but in [the City] who heard about it and
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> joined... Sometimes, I do get students who just kind of want to connect with their
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> ancestry and their heritage, and some of them are outside of the School of Music. (Follow
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> up interview).

Dr. Llanzo indicated why he did not have auditions and how he tries to make the Steelpan

Ensemble accessible and appealing to a diverse range of students. He felt that auditions would

just further the exclusion of many students, while his emphasis was on creating a welcoming and

educational environment where everyone has the opportunity to explore and learn.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I want it to be open to people. I want it to be open to anybody really. Also,
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> not many people have that much experience playing steelpan. If I had auditions, I don't
>
> think I would get many people. I want Caribbean people in there, even if they're not

music majors. I don't want to set any limits because I'd rather have Caribbean people in the ensemble who have no experience than limiting it to only non-Caribbean people, for instance, who might have lots of experience. I don't want to exclude anybody... Why do we audition people? You audition people so that you can learn music quickly; you can play at a certain standard and perform at a concert. Those are not my goals. I don't see how auditioning would help. It would just exclude people, and it's a class where we're learning together. It doesn't align with the goals of the class, which is more about learning about the Caribbeans... Trinidad and Tobago... Calypso and Soca and different things... the culture of Trinidad and the Caribbean through the steelpan. I don't think you need to audition to learn that. (Follow up interview).

Mr. Rohan also highlighted the emphasis on the principle of equal treatment in his ensemble. He believes that music instruction should transcend differences in terms of racial, ethnic, and gender identities, as well as age groups, it should focus on the broader, adaptable experience of learning music. Mr. Rohan stressed that everyone has the right to learn music without any form of discrimination, which a principle that could play a critical role in increasing diversity in student body. He also help in beinring people form Indian comunty to the School of Music.

> **Mr. Rohan:** Now think about promoting diversity. In my class, there are no rules for separate for anybody. Nothing. When an educator teaches to a child, the educator should not be looking at the skin color. The educator should not be looking at the age. The educator should not be looking at the gender of the child or the preferences which the child selects. There cannot be separate rules for anybody. In my class, there are no separate rules for anybody… There are no special rules for anybody in this form of music. Everyone is the same. We treat people exactly in the same manner as we like to be

treated. There are no special rules for gender, skin color, caste, religion, nothing. All are the same, and everyone has the right to learn music... [What about Indian community members?] Yes, we used to have people from the community before COVID. During COVID, we stopped that thing. But yes, we will again start that thing. People from the community, they can audit the class. (First interview)

Dr. John indicated that although the existence of these ensembles at the School of Music might allow for elements of tokenism, some students' lives can indeed be transformed by participating in these ensembles. He emphasized that students' involvement and passion are the real change agents, as they drive demand for these diverse opportunities and experiences within the ensembles. He also mentioned that even though the process is kind of slow and gradual, this process eventually would lead to a shift in the norm, making these diverse opportunities become expected and ingrained in the student experiences. He believed that student-driven experiences are the most significant catalysts for meaningful transformation within the School.

> **Dr. John:** Inclusion, I mean, so it's up there. We are doing this, but in fact, I think for a lot of the administration, both in the degree programs and in music Ed, and from the director and the dean, this allows us to check a box. We're doing diversity work and sort of move on. It's tokenistic, but that's not to say that some students' lives might actually be changed by doing it… I think the biggest changer, change agent is not the ensembles or the professors. It's the students. When the students start demanding things or start taking the same ensemble multiple semesters, and then start writing projects around that ensemble, and then turn that ensemble and do other things outside the building or fold it into their music ed stuff, that's when the change starts happening when the students are doing things. The Old-Time Ensemble in 15 years has grown a lot. A lot of students are

121

involved. A lot of graduate students do their projects, their dissertations on stuff related to

that. Then, they go off into the public schools and take these oral traditions or

participatory traditions and then take that into the schools. That's when things change.

But that takes 30 years… Because at the student level, students are invested in students.

Sometimes they have these experiences that are majorly transformative. That's more

important than any of the thing the administration does. It's tokenistic, but then it builds

and becomes a little bit more expected. They can check a box and tell our national

accreditors that we are being inclusive and diverse, but then it becomes the norm and it's

expected that maybe students have multiple different types of opportunities, which was

not the norm 20 years ago. Then, that becomes part of the student experience and part of

their understanding about what music is, which is in a new place. Then, we try and dial

that up a little bit more. If you look to the student experience, I think you'll find some,

not all, but some students whose lives are changed, or their brains get opened wide.

Dr. Cecilia shared her personal experience of how being part of the Old-Time Ensemble as a

student at the School of Music changed her life. Her participation as student in the ensemble had

a great influence on her perspectives on music and teaching, which aligns with Dr. John's

thoughts. It also is important to highlight that although Dr. Cecilia came from a Western classical

music background, she has become a prominent and influential leader in the world of old-time

music on a national level.

Dr. Cecilia: I have changed because I was in that space [as a student in the Old-Time

Ensemble]… Being in this class changed my life. It changed everything about how I

think about music, how I think about teaching… That was the thing that totally changed

me as a player. And now because I was changed as a player, I was changed as a teacher.

(First interview)

Challenges in Fostering Integration

School Support

Although the School of Music provides support to all of these ensembles, the findings indicated that this support was not evenly distributed, leading to inequitable treatment among the ensembles. The varying degrees of support appeared to play a role in influencing the visibility, productivity, sustainability, and attractiveness of the ensembles to potential student participants. The varied level of School support for these ensembles as well as other settings over all the School calls for attention to ensure equitable opportunities and recognition, and to avoid the potential marginalization of some of these ensembles. Addressing these disparities may foster a more inclusive, supportive, and sustainable environment for all the ensembles, encouraging greater, effective student participation and enriching the overall musical landscape within the School of Music.

Dr. Llanzo expressed satisfaction with the level of support received from the School for his Steelpan Ensemble. They have access to rehearsal space, funds for essential needs, and as a full-time faculty member, he receives compensation. Dr. Llanzo added that the presence of faculty members at his concerts further indicates support. He acknowledged that the financial support for his ensemble and the ability to include it in his workload are indicators of satisfactory backing from the School, which is more substantial than what some other ensembles might receive. Dr. Llanzo also appreciated the willingness of the School director to assist with necessary resources for the ensemble whenever needed.

Dr. Llanzo: It's supportive. I mean, there's a room; we have space. They provide funds for tuning and things like that. I mean, I at least am paid as a full-time faculty member, which is something that I can't say about some of the other ensembles that are used to promote this diversity of global practices. For my ensemble, I think it's supported in that way. People come to the concerts, faculty, I'll see faculty members come to the concerts. I think it's supported. I mean, they give me the space to do it. They allow me to factor it into my workload. I think that's good. I would say they generally supportive of it. I would say financially it supports the director. I would say it's pretty well-supported. [What if you need extra help or resources?] Oh, yeah, I can go to [the School] director, and I would feel comfortable. I think they would help provide resources for that. (First interview)

Dr. John pointed out, regarding this matter, that the process varies for each ensemble, especially in terms of hiring and compensation.

Dr. John: Well, it's slightly different for each ensemble. In terms of hiring, you're a graduate assistant. [Dr. Llanzo] is a tenured professor whose one small piece of his load is the ensemble. [Mr. Rohan] and [Dr. Cecilia] are hired just to do the ensemble, and so they don't get paid a lot. They don't get paid a lot to do that. The economics of [Dr. Llanzo] and your positions are actually much more secure or lofty… I think the fact that the ensembles are mostly on soft money, transient money, or temporary money rather than a 30-year professor does allow the establishment to maintain itself. All of the orchestral positions are permanent tenure track secure jobs, and all of the non-canonical stuff is with softer money. That's a problem! That's where a new thing like having [Dr. Llanzo] as an assistant professor who has job security doing an ensemble is actually

124

maybe a step in that sort of more secure direction. It'd be nice to do that with the Middle

Eastern and with the Indian and all of that as well. Because certainly, paying by the

course semester by semester is not a permanent investment. It's not that secure.

The provided rehearsal spaces for these ensembles vary in appropriateness and adequacy,

raising concerns about equal treatment among different music groups at the School in general.

While all Western ensembles at the School may have access to large rooms and appropriate

rehearsal spaces that accommodate their varying number of members and activities, some of the

ensembles from diverse cultures have the same privilege and others face some limitations and

challenges that impact their practice times and hinder their activities. For instance, the Old-Time

Ensemble has a large rehearsal space that is suitable for accommodating a large number of

students. The room is also acoustically appropriate and has the capacity to foster different

activities, such as rehearsing in small groups, as well as dancing activities.

> **Ian:** Old-time is held in room 110, which is one of our large rehearsal rooms. It works
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> fine for Old-Time Ensemble because of how many people there are. Old-Time Ensemble,
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> it grows and shrinks depending on the semester. It is kind of needed to have that big of a
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> room to have that many people, and also sometimes we dance in there. It's nice to have
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> that huge space that we can do our dance in. I remember you were there at one of the
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> dances. I guess it's an appropriate space, and it's pretty easy to hear across. It's not too
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> boomy in there.

During my observation, I had the opportunity to witness a country dance lesson and actively

participate in the dancing. The room was well-suited for such activities, offering plentiful space

for movement and dancing. There was also a designated area within the room where a small

band of students performed music while we danced. In other observations, Dr. Cecilia would

divide the class into small bands, with some remaining in the main room while others practiced in separate practice rooms or classrooms. Despite having two to three bands rehearsing simultaneously in the main room, there were no issues with overlapping sound or overcrowding. The room size allowed each group to sit in different corners and rehearse effectively at the same time (field notes from observation).

Dr. Llanzo expressed that having a dedicated room specifically for the Steelpan Ensemble would be beneficial, as it would allow students to have more practice time. He mentioned that sharing the room with the percussion studio can sometimes limit the practice opportunities of his students. However, Dr. Llanzo acknowledged that the Steelpan is not a performing ensemble, so the current room is considered quite adequate for their needs. He appreciated the room size and the presence of the instruments and a drum set, which enhances the space's functionality.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** Well, if we had our own room specifically for the Steelpan, then students could come in and practice. It's a bit harder to practice when we share that room with the percussion studio. Those students their major is percussion, so they really have to have priority. They have to have lessons or practice time in that room, so that affects it… That affects how much we can do, but this isn't like a primary focus. It's not like a performing ensemble. Nobody is majoring in steelpan performance here. It's adequate. I think it's adequate for what we're doing. The room is big enough. The instruments are there. There's a drum set in the room, which is great. I have worked in places where there was no drum set in the room, and you have to bring it in. It was annoying. This is one of the better rooms I've had. It does help. I do like that about this space. I like the space. There are limitations, but for the most part, I like it. (First interview)

126

Ruby, in agreement with Dr. Llanzo, found the space to be sufficient and acoustically suitable for the ensemble's activities.

> **Ruby:** I think Steelpan is in [room]146, which is a giant rehearsal space. That's where you had the percussion method class. I think that space is enough and acoustically it makes sense.

As Ruby is an advanced percussionist, she might not have an issue or need to practice between sessions. On the other hand, Thara felt that she needs to practice the music between each rehearsal, especially since she is not a music-major student. Thus, she created her means by drawing a steelpan instrument on a piece of paper to imitate and memorize the way of playing pitches, especially she could not access the room anytime.

> **Thara:** I think the main, not conflict, but difference for me was, if you're learning the guitar or piano or violin, you had one with you in between classes to practice… The only time you got with the steelpan was when you're in your class. I had to come up with kind of weird ways to duplicate the steelpan, so I could practice and get that muscle memory of where you go for, a C sharp is this; a C is this. That was the big difference for me.

During my observation, I also witnessed some practical issues resulting from the shared room for the Steelpan Ensemble and the percussion studio. Before each rehearsal, the students had to set up the room with the steelpan instruments and then return them after the session to make space for other classes. This process consumed some class time and required additional effort from the students. However, Dr. Llanzo and some students often arrived and set up the room before the official class time, which I think helped mitigate this issue. On one occasion, there was a percussion student practicing in the room before the scheduled rehearsal time, and the Steelpan students had to set up during class time. Additionally, the presence of a small office and storage

attached to the room resulted in percussion students occasionally entering the space during

rehearsals to retrieve instruments or use the office. This caused distractions to me sometimes

while playing, especially since I was sitting near the storage door (field notes from observation).

However, Dr. Llanzo further clarified that the issues of setting and packing up the instruments in

each rehearsal, as well as students coming in and out are considered as a minor challenge that

doesn't greatly bother him or any other students in the ensemble. He acknowledged that finding a

separate room for the Steelpan Ensemble might be preferable, but he believes in adapting and

working with the situation at hand, especially since the School might have more critical issues to

address. Dr. Llanzo also appreciated the collaborative and respectful relationship between him

and the percussion students so that he views them as collaborators rather than disruptive

elements to the rehearsals.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** That is a bit of a nuisance having to set up and pack up every day. It takes a
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> long time. It digs into a class time. It's a bit annoying. It's not the best… Students do
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> come in and out because it's a shared room. They have to get things. It rarely does not
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> bother me. I just think it's a minor challenge. There are other issues in the School of
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> Music that I think are a higher priority than finding a separate room for the Steelpan. It's
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> something that recognizes an issue, but sometimes you just have to work with it... It
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> could be better, but I'm okay with it for now...The grad students have their office in
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> there... They have to do their work. They have to come in and out. I know them. They're
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> percussion students, and I tend to have percussion students. They're either in my class, or
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> they've taken Steelpan, or they're in Steelpan. They're also very helpful to me. They'll
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> help me to set up sometimes. They'll help me to get an instrument. They're also very
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> helpful to me... I find them to be quite respectful... I've never heard anybody complain

about people coming in and out. I think we're working together. I feel I want to have a good relationship with the percussionist and the percussion area, so they help me; I help them... It didn't feel disruptive to me, and the students have never complained either. (Follow up interview)

The Indian Ensemble also faces time-consuming challenges related to setting up the room for rehearsals. However, their situation is even more challenging due to the poor acoustic conditions in the classroom they use, along with the small size of the class. Both Mr. Rohan and Ruby highlighted the importance of having a dedicated and appropriately equipped rehearsal space for the Indian Ensemble, where efficient setup arrangements are essential for productive and focused rehearsals, which seemed the School is not supporting in this regard leaving the ensemble somehow marginalized.

> **Mr. Rohan:** For our thing [ensemble], our challenge is that we need one classroom where we don't have to adjust the tables every time. [Like how much, five minutes?] It's more than five minutes at the beginning. The beginning ten minutes and ten at the end, and it takes away from the class because we have to adjust the chairs and tables and then roll the carpet. At least we can have ours. The university has so much space. Can they give us one thing which can be just ours? If that was done, I am not even asking for the acoustics and too many things. I am just asking for, let us not do this every time. (First interview)
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> **Ruby:** But in the Indian Ensemble, we had to put it in the classroom right across [the interview room], and acoustically is not the best. Every time, we have to move chairs away and then put them back, put carpets on them. It's like creating our own little stage every time. I wish there are better rehearsing space for it.

The School of Music possesses a large collection of instruments to support students participating in these ensembles. Students can borrow or use instruments from the school during their enrollment, especially if the instrument is not their primary instrument.

Ian: The School has a couple instruments for people to use, especially things like basses. Most people, if they're not like a bass player, aren't going to own their own bass… I think they have a couple of banjos. I have my own banjo, but I think there are some people that borrow banjos from the school. Obviously people borrow fiddles from the school. Our library has some pretty good books on old-time music. I guess in terms of physical objects, the school facilitates Old-Time Ensemble pretty well.

Ruby: For Steelpan, we store all the instruments in room 146. School owns all of them. And for Indian, we rent from the school again.

However, there may be limitations in terms of the number of instruments available for the Indian Ensemble, which somehow limits the students' enrollment in the ensemble, as mentioned by Mr. Rohan. As there might not be enough instruments available in the class, some students interested in learning specific Indian instruments might not join the ensemble. Therefore, Mr. Rohan maintained a welcoming approach by either encouraging students to learn available Indian instruments or allowing them to use their own instruments so that he could maintain or increase the enrolment of his students. Nevertheless, he does not permit students to use electronic instruments in his ensemble, because in his belief, a music instrument must produce a sound without any involvement of electricity.

Mr. Rohan: [How many students do you have?] Six. [Do you allow more students to enroll?] Yes, if they can bring their own instruments. We have an issue with the instrument because we have, for example, three sitars and a sarod. Then, we have three

130

pairs, two, three pairs of tabla. For example, this time more students wanted to learn the sarod, but I could not because we have just one sarod. I had to just push them towards the sitar. [So, if more students want to enroll, can they bring their instruments, even if not Indian?] So, yes, they can bring their own instrument. We had an oboe player with us. We had a guitar in our class. We had different instruments. We are open to anybody, and I welcome every instrument in my ensemble, but it has to be an instrument. What is the definition of an instrument? It should be producing a musical sound without the use of electricity. I do not allow those kinds of keyboards into my class... because it is cheating. Okay. You are not bringing in your quality or ability to learn an instrument and play it. By pressing or writing music on a computer, automatically, it will be played. That is not music. That is not an individual's ability to play music. It should be an instrument like the oud, most welcome, guitar, violin, cello, flute, bring anything. (First interview)

Therefore, I played the oud during my observation because there was not an Indian instrument available during that time as the students had them.

  At individuals support level, Dr. Cecilia expressed gratitude for the continuous support provided by Dr. John, who played a significant role in enhancing her experience at the School of Music. She also praised the positive encouragement from the current and former School of Music directors, which all have contributed to the ensemble's visibility and presence on campus as well as in the community.

  Dr. Cecilia: [Dr. John], he's just like an ally for the Old-Time Ensemble within the School of Music, even though he is only peripherally involved in it at this point, but he was there in the very beginning. When I have questions, he's usually the first person I go to because he knows what it's like to be in there. He's seen the whole journey of the

131

ensemble. He knows what my goals are for the ensemble, and I really value and trust his opinion. I will say [the current School director] has been really nice to work with. It's been really good to know that the director of the School of Music wants the Old-Time Ensemble to be visible, and to be kind of radically present on campus in a way that I don't think any other director of the School of Music has pushed in that way. [The former School director] definitely was like a champion for us as well. [The current and former School directors], I can see that they want Old-Time Ensemble and all of the ensembles. I see the ways that they invited us when things are happening in the community. They always let us know, like, oh, this is something maybe you want to entertain if you have the time and if you can get your students to commit. I have a lot of respect for that because it would be very easy to just send that to a string quartet. (First interview)

Similarly, Mr. Rohan appreciated the valuable roles of Dr. John, as well as the current and former School directors in supporting him and his ensembles (as he mentioned in previous passages).

At the music faculty support level, findings indicated that the support varied between some ensembles. As Dr. Llanzo mentioned, he felt that his ensemble is supported by the music faculty as they attend his concerts. Dr. Cecilia also noted a positive relationship with the string faculty, fostering a supportive environment for students to join her ensemble.

Dr. Cecilia: I personally feel like I have a good relationship with the string faculty at [the University] and that they are supportive of their string students joining Old-Time Ensemble because it's not hurting them!

Conversely, Mr. Rohan did not feel that he received the same level of support from the music faculty at the School of Music, especially in promoting or recommending his ensemble to their

132

students (as I discussed earlier). Hence, the Indian Ensemble may suffer from reduced recognition and promotion within the School, potentially impacting its participation by students. However, Dr. John expressed his view on the lack of a cohesive approach among the faculty members of the School when it comes to supporting and promoting these ensembles. He also considered that the importance of participating in these ensembles may vary depending on where the ensembles fit within the curriculum, how advisors guide their students, and how many spaces students have in their programs.

> **Dr. John:** I don't think the music department does anything. I think the degree program might tell somebody that it's important, or not important depending on where it is in the curriculum. Somebody's advisor might encourage them to do something or might not at all. There's 50 different advisors in the building. All of my students that I advise, I make sure that they know about the different ensembles. Most of the music Ed folk would advise their students to do different types of things. It's a tough thing because the music Ed degree is so packed with other stuff. They don't have a lot of room. Some of the performance faculty would really encourage students to take these ensembles. Some wouldn't. It's very haphazard. It's not really a single message that's coming from them.

Place within the Music Curricula and Degree Programs

Besides the supportive role of music faculty in encouraging students to participate in these ensembles, equally crucial is the place of these ensembles within the curriculum of music degree programs in supporting their visibility and importance among students. Other degree requirements may discourage students from taking these ensembles, and even if students do enroll, the ensembles are not the central focus of their program, leading to reduced engagement with the class. When these ensembles are presented merely as optional choices for students,

133

which students can take or not, the optional choices may inadvertently create a perception that these ensembles are not valued or essential within the School, even for those students who decide to enroll. Mr. Rohan shared his observation that some of his students in the Indian Ensemble had strong dedication but others lacked a strong commitment, potentially influenced by the fact that the ensemble is not a mandatory component of the music curriculum.

> **Mr. Rohan:** Those who come to my ensemble, mostly they take it seriously. But yes, there are some people who do not as you will have it in every class. But yes, if they had to, if they had this [Indian Ensemble] as a mandatory subject, then it could be a different thing. (First interview)

Dr. John expressed concerns that despite having these various ensembles, they were treated as "electives" without strong encouragement in the degree programs. Although changes have been considered by music education program, he raised reservations about using the term "eclectic ensemble" as it seemed to imply that these ensembles were somehow seen as inferior or marginalized in the degree programs (Even though the term "eclectic" is no longer used in the School curriculum, that placement in the curriculum still has its impacts. The term "eclectic" is still used by a wide range of students and teachers at the School, including some of the participants in this research). Dr. John emphasized the need to align the curriculum with the values of diversity and inclusion in school because he felt that these ensembles lacked balance in curriculum although they became part of some music programs. However, the process of making changes and improvements it still ongoing and did not stop at the school, which might serve these ensembles at the end.

> **Dr. John:** All of these ensembles were electives… Even though we had the ensembles, there was nothing in the degree programs that encouraged students to be in these

ensembles. That's when the music Ed program created the eclectic ensemble category, which was a word that was used in the music Ed world. I think it's really offensive word because it's the Other, the non-normal, the abnormal stuff, the outsider music. But at least, it got in the curriculum as you can take five or six semesters of the big ensemble and then you have to take something different. That's not really balanced, not at all! But at least saying, if we want diversity, if we value diversity, then it should be in the curriculum as mandatory. But then we value, saying we value diversity, and then you can take that ensemble or not! If we value diversity or inclusion, then we should make sure that that's an experience that our students get. If we're not guiding our curriculum in a way that sort of meet our values, then!? In the BA degree, we're actually making changes right now that will mandate students to a certain number of credits in not large ensembles. And you know exactly what's going to be in that group of ensembles.

Dr. John also emphasized that the overall goals of the various music degree programs influence how students perceived the importance of these ensembles. These goals impact students' decisions on whether to take these ensembles or not. Therefore, Dr. John advocated for even greater emphasis on diversity of experiences in degree programs to better prepare students for their chosen career paths.

Dr. John: I would think more about what degree program and what's the goal of the degree program. The performance degree is implicitly a classical music performance degree where it's training people for life on the stage. Right?... If you're going to do that, then you need to spend a lot of time working on technique on your instrument. That's very, very different than a music Ed degree that's supposed to be preparing somebody to go out into the schools and communicate with kids, which is a very different set of skills

necessary. I would expect for the music Ed students, the wider their experience, the more diverse experiences they have in their training, the better to make them a good teacher. For the performance student where they need to work on their technique in order to get their job, maybe they don't need as many of these ensembles that do different things because they're looking at that path. They want to be the oboist in the symphony. That's a pretty elite specific job that requires a lot of specific training. The music teacher in the public school has Black students and Mexican students and students that listen to pop music... They have a whole wide mix of people that they're trying to connect with. If they've been trained as an oboist exclusively, they're not going to be a good teacher. For the music Ed folks, I would make sure that they have a lot of different types of experiences. The BA degree is a liberal arts degree where it's not really training for a particular job, but it's supposed to give you a bunch of different perspectives on how the world works, on how cultures do their thing and how music thinks. So again, diversity of experiences is pretty important. The degree programs kind of reflect that, but not to the degree that I would like to see.

Dr. John pointed out that historically, the curriculum has been directing students towards specific paths, which has limited their choices. Nevertheless, recent endeavors have been made to shift the curriculum toward new directions that are more responsive to students' preferences and needs.

Dr. John: I do think that a lot of it is the students that are trying to do different things, or want to do different things, or want to play in an ensemble rather than another semester in the wind ensemble. The curriculum still wants to push them this direction and some of the students say, I want to do this other thing… That creates student need. Then, we get

new degree programs. They're like the BA that's much more inclusive, or the Pop Tech degree that would actually not only allow, but encourage people, students to take Middle Eastern or Old-Time… It's actually on the list of courses that students should take rather than the old model which is, yeah, take it if you want, but we're not going to encourage it. So there is on the curricular level, there are some things that are changing that are allowing more students to do that.

Ian affirmed Dr. John's observation and wished he could have applied his Old-Time Ensemble credits, taken over seven semesters, as the core of his degree program. He even wished he could have an option of obtaining a degree specifically in Old-Time music.

Ian: The only thing that I wish was different about Old-Time Ensemble is that I wish I could have used it as my large ensemble credit. I would have rather put all of my energy towards Old-Time Ensemble than splitting it between orchestra and Old-Time Ensemble. Yeah, I wish I could have, in the same way that I guess my concentrations in like viola, classical viola, and like some other people in their concentration might be in jazz, I wish that I could have had my concentration in Old-Time.

On the other hand, Dr. Llanzo expressed mixed concerns about the role of the Steelpan Ensemble in the music program. While acknowledging its significance in contributing to the diversity of experiences, he is unsure if his ensemble should be at the center of the curriculum or remain as an elective. He grappled with the question of institutionalization.

Dr. Llanzo: It's a hard question. It's a hard question. I mean, it's not the center of any program. It's always going to be like elective. It's always going to be additive. I don't even know if I want it to be the center of a program. I don't know. I've conflicted feelings about institutionalization of this. Maybe that's just the purpose it serves here.

137

Maybe that's the way to think about it. It is additive. It's here to specifically contribute to the diversity of experiences, but it's not the focus. Maybe that's what it has to be. I don't know. I think about that question a lot. It's hard for me to land on something specific because I have really conflicting feelings and thoughts about it. (First interview)

Institutionalization Concerns

Dr. John believed that incorporating a greater variety of ensembles can help move away from the dominant focus on Western music settings. He suggested that bringing in more diverse traditions could create a more equitable environment for all ensembles. However, Dr. John also acknowledged that not all musical traditions may be suitable for institutionalization.

> **Dr. John**: I think the more we bring in, the more we sort of decenter the orchestra band thing. It would be nice to get all of them on the same level playing field. Maybe some ensembles, some traditions don't belong in the academy. Some traditions should not be in the university. Rock bands and punk bands, if you're an anti-establishment punk band, you shouldn't be in the institution.

As mentioned above, Dr. Llanzo expressed conflicting views on institutionalizing the Steelpan Ensemble and make it in the core of music programs. He has been concerned that institutionalization of the Steelpan might eliminate its genuine community meanings and expectations, making it conform to the School norms of a performance-based model.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** Well, I have different views on that because on one hand, I'm not even sure if I want the Steelpan to be a part of the curriculum. Because it's a community ensemble from the Caribbean, when it becomes institutionalized, sometimes it takes away from some of its meanings within community. You have to force it to become something else because there is expectation that it's going to be a performance ensemble. You have to

138

perform with a concert. You have to adapt some of your teaching strategies to fit within this like two-hour time limit once a week. There are things that are lost when you start institutionalizing community ensembles.

He also shared concerns about whether the ensemble alone provides enough experience for students to become qualified to teach or compose in this field of Steelpan, especially if they take the ensemble, which is offered for beginner performers, for one semester or so as an elective.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I'm also sometimes concerned that by institutionalizing it…, it's not part of a degree program here, am I then authorizing students and giving them credentials to go and teach an ensemble when they might not really get enough of that experience here to be able to do that? Then, they can go and say that they've done it; they've learned it here and then that gives them experience to do it. Whereas it's a whole field of study, and one ensemble alone isn't really enough to see that you're qualified to teach it. I worry about that. Am I giving students the ability and authority to go off and do this, or composition students to go out and compose for it just from an ensemble that's really for beginners? That worries me a little bit. (First interview)

On the other hand, Dr. Llanzo questioned that if having the Steelpan Ensemble as an elective, that placement might reinforce the power structure of the Eurocentric paradigm of the School of Music that leads to tokenism and might even emphasize the marginalization of steelpan music.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I also sometimes worry that by having a Steelpan that's like an elective, I'm complicit in the system that allows the School of Music to really focus on European classical music, but then they can point to the Steelpan over there and say, well, look, we're doing diversity! Am I just reinforcing this kind of marginalized Caribbean music in the university setting? That's something I think about. (First interview)

139

Dr. Llanzo added that the institutionalization of the Steelpan Ensemble in the name of diversity might lead to some practices that might perpetuate the existing status quo and stereotypes.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** Institutionalizing something for the sake of diversity maybe it emphasizes the marginality of this particular music. By extension, Afro diasporic music, or like musical to the non-Western canon, maybe by doing it the way I'm doing it, it helps to marginalize the genre, so it maintains the status quo. Perhaps that's something that it does. Maybe we perform where we wear all black. Maybe that can reinforce some of that too. The idea of the concert, concert attire, what it means to perform at a concert. Maybe it does that as well. In the idea of having concerts at all, maybe it reinforces that. That has to be the final performance even though I don't do it every semester. (First interview)

Division Affiliation: To Whom Do We Belong?

The division affiliation and administrative oversight for ensembles from diverse cultures at the School of Music seemed to be unclear and somewhat, implying potential marginalization. This is another challenge that prevents these ensembles to be fully integrated into the School structure. Although different Western performance settings follow specific areas at the School of Music, these ensembles do not explicitly function under a specific existing area, leading to ambiguity about their administrative structure and oversight. Also, it was not clear for the ensemble directors to identify whether these ensembles belong to either music education, music studies/ethnomusicology and musicology, or performance division, and therefore, the ensembles seem to float without a designated departmental affiliation.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I've read that question. It's such a gray. . . Nobody knows. There is an ensemble, a conductor's ensemble's area here. I don't fall under that, neither do you? That's more like orchestra, wind ensemble, symphonia. We don't fall under that. There's

an ensemble's office that we don't fall under that. They're not doing anything for us, really. So it looks like we've fallen under ethnomusicology, but not officially. We're just kind of floating. We don't really belong anywhere. I think the ethnomusicologists take a strong interest in the Indian, Old-Time, Middle Eastern, and Steelpan Ensamples. There's no official, which is kind of a problem! (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia: But because it's the non-Western art music stuff that we do, it kind of falls within musicology, ethnomusicology. Because it's a teaching and learning ensemble, it kind of falls under music education… I don't know what department I would fall under at this time! (First interview)

Mr. Rohan: I work under the School of Music. I don't know which department! (Follow up interview)

Dr. Llanzo expressed additional concerns about the lack of clarity regarding oversight and division affiliation for these ensembles. He considered that part of the problem was not having an appropriate definition of these ensembles. Dr. Llanzo also provided an example of how this lack of clear categorization could create difficulties during critical decision-making processes and communication.

Dr. Llanzo: Well, I guess it's a broader issue of not being able to define what these ensembles are. They're the world ensemble, so they're eclectic ensembles. But like, who's overseeing them? I am the only full-time faculty who directs any of these... I think [Dr. John] is the instructor of record of the Middle Eastern and maybe India, I'm not sure, but I don't know if he gets any workload credit for doing that. It's kind of unclear who is overseeing these. If we ever had to have a meeting to discuss what we're doing, like, who are we meeting with? It's kind of unclear where we belong, and that gets a bit confusing.

141

It's just unclear. Sometimes there can be issues there like when we're in COVID. When everybody was switching to online and we couldn't meet, everybody's discussion like what ensembles do. I didn't know where I fit in like, who do I talk to? What are the decisions being made? Whose decisions do I need to follow? I was very confused because I feel like I don't know who I report to where this is concerned. (First interview)

Dr. John further explained that all these ensembles initially originated from music studies. However, the recent restructuring process that has been done by the School made these ensembles function independently from any specific division.

> **Dr. John:** I mean, they were all born out of music studies. We've restructured a bunch of ways over the years. They have become more included in music Ed degree programs, not in terms of sort of organizing them, but in terms of the degree programs. They've been a little bit more included in music Ed in the last couple years. A couple of years ago, we had to add a new prefix, the ENS prefix, which is sort of the MUP is the performance prefix, the MUE is the music ed prefix, the MUS is the music studies that are those three divisions. But now, we have the ENS prefix, which is for all the ensembles, which sort of float independent of that.

So even though these ensembles were included in the music education degree program, they still do not belong specifically to the music education division or any other division at the School.

Problem of Terminology

As Dr. Llanzo highlighted above, there have been difficulties in defining these ensembles. The findings demonstrated that the various terms used to describe these ensembles, such as "non-Western," "non-traditional," "non-canonical," "eclectic," "elective," "World/ Global," and "ethnic," have been problematic due to their potential associations with Othering,

inferiority, marginalization, and misleading and misrepresentation. These labels have been used in the literature, the placement of these ensembles in music programs, and by some individuals both within and outside the School, which raised concerns about the need for more inclusive and respectful language when discussing and classifying these musical traditions, if they need to be classified or grouped together at all.

> **Dr. John:** Oh, that's all horrible. World music ensemble makes no sense because they're all. . . everything we do is world and is in the world! Non-Western, that makes no sense! Anything with non in front of it, sort of defining something by what it is not, it is really sort of dismissive, kind of condescending, Othering.
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> **Dr. Llanzo:** Western, non-Western, traditional, non-traditional, canonical, non-canonical, it doesn't work. They're trying to do like conducted ensembles versus non-conducted ensembles, but that doesn't really work either. There are lots of different things that they were trying and none of the labels fit. (First interview)
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> **Ian:** For music ed, I'm not sure how it works for incoming people, but for my year, taking one eclectic ensemble, even though I know the word eclectic is kind of a bad word in some people's mind, taking one eclectic ensemble is required, but after that I took it six times as an elective. [Why is it bad?] I think it's a kind of a thin line sometimes. I think eclectic can be used to classify things in a binary of classical music and then the rest of music. Just that in itself I think puts an importance on classical music that I don't think that it has over other types of music because if it's classical or the rest. That means that the rest are grouped together in classicals its own thing. I don't think it's more important than this thousands of other types of music that there are in my opinion. I do understand that a university has to have a way to define music that's not classical music

143

because we are a classical focused institution. I think that there's better ways around…

yeah, because they're just music. It's not other music; it's just music.

Dr. John suggested naming these ensembles using more natural terms such as "ensembles," "groups," or "classes." He emphasized that it is not appropriate to group these ensembles under one category as each ensemble has its uniqueness and cultural significance that makes it distinct from others. He added that the main reason these ensembles have been grouped together has been due to their contrast with the prevailing Western music settings. Thus, the more traditions are included in the School, the more the idea of categorization will be eliminated.

> **Dr. John:** I'd prefer to call them just ensembles or groups or experiences or classes where the Middle Eastern Ensemble is a class, and the wind ensemble is a class… The Middle Eastern Ensemble is really different than the Old-Time Ensemble. It operates differently. It has different sort of ways it's trying to do. It has different sort of culture things that it's trying to represent. But the more difference we get, the more you can't put all of these things in one bucket. It's not like the Steelpan, Indian, Middle Eastern, and Old-Time Ensembles are doing the same thing. Not at all. The only reason we're lumping them all together is because of this thing over here that is the band, orchestra, and choir, but these things aren't the same. So, until we get more power and attention and size of this stuff… but terminology is a problem!

Dr. Llanzo aligned with Dr. John's views and acknowledged that categorizing different music approaches into one group can lead to hierarchies, artificial distinctions, and false divisions.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** You just can't fit different approaches to music into boxes, neat boxes. It sets up hierarchies or reinforces hierarchies. You know, here, maybe the important ensembles and here, the ensembles are here for diversity. It reinforces; it marginalizes

some ensembles… It creates a distinction that sometimes is pretty artificial, like oral

tradition ensembles versus non-oral traditions. That doesn't really work because even the

orchestra, there's some oral. It's not just written. The Indian Ensemble is not just oral,

and there's written things. The Middle Eastern Ensemble is written sometimes. There are

these distinct classical versus non-classical. Indian music is classical by some people.

What does classical even mean? Art music vs non-art music, but what is art like? Who

says that Indian classical or Middle Eastern is not art music? What is that? The labels,

sometimes they're useful for organization or purposes, but they don't quite fit. They

create false divisions or distinctions. That's the big problem, and we don't really want to

reinforce those here. (First interview)

Dr. Llanso noted the School's efforts in addressing this issue by not putting labels on the lists of

ensembles in the degree programs. All different types of ensembles are placed under a list simply

called "ensemble," eliminating previous labels that make distinctions between Western settings

and ensembles from diverse cultures in music programs.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** We're trying not to put labels on it. I think most programs what they're
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> trying to do is say, if they want you to take this, they'll say, well, they just have lists. You
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> can take ensembles from this list or this list or like this list. Or you must take two credits
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> from these ensembles, this list of ensembles, instead of trying to put a label because I
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> think we're all realizing that the labels don't work. (First interview)

Schedule Issues

There have been some concerns about the scheduling of these ensembles, as most of them

take place after 5 pm for two hours, once a week. Although the scheduled time might work better

for community members, some music Ed and grad students, and some ensemble directors, that

time can also limit the visibility of these ensembles. The late scheduling might further contribute to the marginalization of these ensembles within the music program, as some other settings might get priority in the schedule over these ensembles.

> **Dr. John:** Most of them are after five. Some of that has to do with the size of the ensemble. Getting a room at two o'clock in the afternoon is sometimes difficult. Some of it has to do with what was there first. After five o'clock works much better for the community, for people outside of music, for people that are working during the day. The music Ed students that teach and then come here, they can't do anything before five o'clock. But, it does, and of course! [Mr. Rohan] can only teach on Fridays because he's got a job the rest of the time. But, it does interfere with their visibility. It's hard to, unless they're going to become more central to the curriculum, then there would be an argument to put it into the middle parts of the day. But, yeah, it's a problem! It's definitely another way that they get marginalized!

Ian expressed similar thoughts regarding the scheduling of these ensembles. He acknowledged later classes may not pose as much of an issue for graduate students, as same as for him. But for undergraduates, having ensembles scheduled in the evening can be discouraging, especially with the two hours duration, once a week. Ian suggested that having shorter and more frequent rehearsals, such as an hour or one hour and a half twice a week during the middle of the day, would be his ideal scenario, similar to the orchestra schedule.

> **Ian:** I know a lot of grad student classes are later in the day, so they're going to be here late anyways. But for undergrads, it kind of like having that late in the day can discourage people from taking them over and over again. I happen to really level time ensemble, so they could have put it at 9pm and I still would have showed up for the two hours, but not

everyone feels that way. Having it that late in the day is kind of a burden in some ways, especially whenever there are times, I know it wouldn't necessarily work for all the students or all the professors to have it in the middle of the day either, but I don't know. Having it late in the day is kind of a burden sometimes, and it being two hours long and once a week. Whenever like, orchestra is in the middle of the day, twice a week. I guess in an ideal world, if it was in the middle of the day for an hour twice a week, or an hour and a half twice a week, that would be my ideal world.

The ensemble directors have been aware that the once-a-week schedule for ensembles may not be as effective as desired. However, their primary job commitments outside of directing ensembles limit their ability to modify rehearsal times. This situation may discourage some students from participating and could impact the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process during the one-week period. Nevertheless, the ensemble directors make careful plans to ensure their courses are as efficient and effective as possible under the given constraints.

Mr. Rohan: [The schedule] It's not [effective] as much as I would have expected because my hours are limited [two hours, once a week]. For example, there are several students who want to join, but they cannot come on a Friday during this time. I don't have a choice. I have other job [IT engineering] also, which I have to continue. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia: I think it's not enough [once a week]. I don't think it's enough personally. If they wanted it to happen more than once a week, I probably would not be able to teach that class just because it's the time commitment for me not being full time at [the University] makes it tough… I try to plan and plan and plan for Old-Time Ensemble to be successful welcoming affirming impactful and effective for all of these students because I

147

don't have a lot of time. It takes a lot of my time and planning over the summer and at the beginning of each semester to make sure that things go as smoothly as they can because my main gig [job] is the sixth or eighth-grade orchestra. (Follow up interview)

Dr. Llanzo: From one thing, I only meet once a week with the Steelpan Ensemble here, and that's not the best in terms of pedagogy. It's better to do it twice a week at least. Because if it's once a week, students forget by the time they come next week, and we have to go over it. It's hard for them to practice because it's not like they own their own instruments… I made a decision to do it once a week because I don't really have time to be coming in multiple times because this isn't the focus of my job…It's the smallest part of my teaching workload. It doesn't quite affect my tenure case in a major way. I can't spend too much time on it. I have to try and be as effective as possible. (First interview)

In this context, Ian explained how they utilize an audio recording strategy in the Old-Time Ensemble to overcome the challenge of meeting only once a week. He suggested that having the ensemble meet twice a week could potentially eliminate the need for this strategy,

Ian: In Old-Time, we've found ways around that huge week gap by a lot of the times whenever we're learning a new tune, we'll all turn on our phones to do a voice recording and slide them into the middle of the circle so that we can hear that tune. We have a class on Tuesday, if on Friday, for some reason, we can't remember how that tune goes, we can listen to it real quick. But if it happened twice a week, we might wouldn't need to do that.

Ensemble Sustainability Concerns

Budget issues have a significant impact on the long-term sustainability and growth of these ensembles. As previously mentioned, the West African drum ensemble was one of the first

148

ensembles affected by budget cuts in 2009-2010. Some ensemble directors expressed concerns about budget constraints, as their teaching positions for these ensembles are considered among the most vulnerable at the School. Dr. Cecilia expressed concerns about budget issues and the vulnerability she feels as her position is not secure because she is a part-time, non-full-time faculty member, and a woman in academia, as well as her primary focus has been on bundling community rather than engaging with scholarly publications. Therefore, she has been cautious about seeking increased financial support for her ensemble.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: It's better not asking for increasing money for the teacher because the issue of budget… I am always a little bit afraid anytime I get an email that's about budget reduction scenarios. Knowing that first of all, I teach a class that is one credit. Second of all, I am not full-time faculty. Third of all and it's goes maybe a bit controversial to say, but because I'm like a woman in academia, I do feel like a woman in academia is a little bit more vulnerable when you're not a full-time faculty member, and because most of my efforts are not scholarly publications. Most of the stuff that I do with Old-Time Ensemble is much more grassroots community based, and it's about that building of community between the larger traditional and roots music community being in our setting. (Follow up interview)

Mr. Rohan also shared his concerns about the budget cuts that impacted the Indian Ensemble. Previously, the ensemble had two sections offered at overlapping time slots on Fridays (Indian Music Ensemble I from 1 to 3 pm and Indian Music Ensemble II from 2 to 4 pm). However, after the recent budget cuts, his teaching hours were reduced, and he had to combine both sections into one time slot, now held from 1 to 3 pm, and receive compensation for only one section.

Mr. Rohan: Well, we have had two sections at two different times. But currently, there was a letter from the university that now we will be reducing the time and paying you for just one section. But, I continue doing two sections in one session. (First interview)

As part of this problem, Dr. John highlighted a significant issue within the School, noting the School's tendency to invest more in instruments and equipment for ensembles rather than investing in qualified individuals who could teach and lead these ensembles.

Dr. John: There's usually more money in the building to buy equipment than there is to hire people. If we need to buy another oud, we can do that pretty easily. If we need to hire another person to run another ensemble, that's tougher. It's different pots of money.

Dr. John also pointed out that the School doesn't function as a singular entity but relies on the willingness of individual directors, leaders, and faculty members to advocate for necessary changes. He mentioned that while not everyone in the School may share the same vision for these ensembles if some were to disappear, there would likely be voices calling for their reinstatement.

Dr. John: Well, when you say the school, you're assuming a singularity there. There's not a singularity. It often takes either the willingness of a director or a leader to sort of push certain agendas, or it takes certain faculty members as individuals to push things forward, or not. I expect if all of these ensembles were to disappear next semester, there would be some of, maybe not universally, but there would be a lot of people saying we need to fix that.

Dr. John expressed additional concerns about the School's mission statement not receiving sufficient awareness and emphasis. These concerns might be indicative of a broader issue within the music community at the School of Music, as not everyone at the School might fully subscribe

to the mission statement's principles and objectives. However, the new director has been making efforts to bring attention to this issue, potentially leading to positive changes in the future.

> **Dr. John:** The mission statement is "we approach music as an essential part of human culture and therefore aspire to engage with the diversity of musical meanings and practices globally and locally. Our student and faculty scholarship enrich understandings of music as sound, text, and activity"… We have a mission statement, but the question is how much does a mission statement actually guide what people are trying to do? The best, yeah. In my mind, there's a big disconnect. If you were to ask most faculty what our mission statement was, they wouldn't know. It's not repeated often. It's not driving how we hire people, how we design the curriculum, how we assign GAs or TAs. It's not guiding how we advertise. It's not guiding, so it doesn't come up in meetings. It's there in a drawer somewhere. But anyway, our new director is trying to draw some attention to that, so there may be some things will change.

The challenges faced by ensembles from diverse cultures at the School of Music can be partly attributed to the disconnect between certain individuals in the School community and the School's mission statement. These ensembles align closely with the mission statement's core principles because they reflect global and local engagement with the diversity of musical meanings and traditions that foster the perception of music as sound, knowledge, and behavior, as emphasized by all the ensemble directors. Therefore, the tendency of School investments, varying opinions and commitments of individuals at the School of Music, along with the different levels of alignment with the school's mission statement, can indeed create challenges for the sustainability and growth of these music ensembles from diverse cultures.

Moreover, Dr. John explained that the existence and continuity of these ensembles at the School of Music depend on various factors. Returning to one of the initial themes, as the establishment of these ensembles was rather serendipitous and circumstantial, the availability of qualified individuals within the community for suitable replacements plays a crucial role in continuing these ensembles. Dr. John added bringing in someone from outside the area would require a full-time position, which could be challenging. He expressed a strong desire to keep all ensembles, including those representing diverse cultures, but recognizes the practical constraints of resources and curriculum. While he envisions having a wide variety of ensembles, Dr. John admitted the limitations, as having too many would not be logistically feasible. Despite this, he believed that the School should have more ensembles than it currently does.

> **Dr. John:** Depends which ensemble? Depends. I mean, kind of the way the ensembles came in or sort of random and happenstance. If one of the ensembles stops, then I'm going to look around to see if there's anybody that could carry it on. In the case of [the former director of the Old-Time Ensemble], [Dr. Cecilia] was able to take on the Old-Time Ensemble. She had actually started taking it on before [the former director of the Old-Time Ensemble] left. If [Mr. Rohan] leaves, I'm not so sure who would or should be running an Indian Ensemble if they don't know the tradition. It depends. Running the Indian Ensemble or the Middle Eastern Ensemble is not a full-time job. Right? If there was somebody in the neighborhood that could teach just the class, we could maybe make that work. But to advertise to bring somebody and have them move and move their family here, we'd need to have to give them a full-time job, a full job. Right? Which either means expanding the ensemble or teaching other things or whatnot. If we were to lose the ensemble, I would look for people to take it over. I would look for what sort of

152

investment has been made into the ensemble that I could leverage the dean or the director to invest further in this. There are all sorts of experts in different traditions that are in the area that we could maybe do something different with. I absolutely want to keep all of these ensembles around, but life happens, and people move. We need a gospel ensemble too. We need something that addresses the Mexican population, like a Conjunto or a Mariachi ensemble. We need to have some rock ensembles. We need a Gamelan. We need a West African drum ensemble. We need 20 other ensembles. How does the economics of that work? How does it fit into the curriculum? We can't logically have 100 different ensembles. I don't know what the right number is. I think the right number, whatever it is, is more than we have.

Mr. Rohan further explained his concerns about the growth and continuity of his ensemble emphasizing that reducing the ensemble time in the schedule would negatively impact its growth. He emphasized that if the School really wants the Indian Ensemble to grow, the School should provide more support to the ensemble in terms of increased schedule time, making the ensemble mandatory in the music degree programs, as well as hiring him as a full-time instructor, especially since the School has already made investments in purchasing Indian instruments. Mr. Rohan demonstrated his readiness to leave his current job and work full-time at the university if the financial aspect is addressed to ensure the sustainability of the Indian Ensemble. He believed that this growth will not only benefit the School but also attract more students to the School.

Mr. Rohan: If I can expand time, that will really make it more accessible to more students. For example, if I can have one more day or so which students can come. Or on the same day, if I can have a different time, one more time, that will help in expanding

153

this program. But formerly, for example, I was hired for two sections. Then, they change it to just one section. Now, we keep on adding separate sections into it [one class time] without any additional things [payment] from the university. We do that thing. But with budget constraints and all those things, there are several things which are going on at the university also. I think if you [the School] really want to grow this thing [the Indian Ensemble], it should be a part of the main syllabus…If you make it a mandatory part, then yes, this is a necessary thing, then it will help in bringing more students and expanding this program. The university is already invested in terms of buying instruments. The sitars which you saw over there are bought by the Universities, the tabla is bought by the university. So, the University owns them. Now, it's all about making it and giving more time to it. Now, am I ready to leave my existing job and come to the university full time? Yes, I am ready. That would be my eventually thing. But then, the financial aspect also should be considered so that me changing that job would not be impacting this thing…Yes, make it more available at different time slots, make it mandatory, and then you will see how this program grows, not just that it will help the University, but also in enrolling new students. (First interview)

Indeed, Mr. Rohan questioned whether the school would support the growth of the Indian Ensemble, especially since there has been no discussion or communication with him regarding potential solutions or ways to expand the Indian Music Ensemble.

Mr. Rohan: I can be at the University full-time. Give me a job, and we will work it out. This program will be exposed to so many students. Make it mandatory. I will be there because that is what I love to do, but I definitely need one full-time job. I can't just be in a part-time job... If there has a will, there is a way. If the University has the will, we will

154

find a way together. But for that, they should at least call me for a meeting saying, okay [Mr. Rohan], let's sit together in front of a table and tell me what we can do for you, and we will try to find a way out. Has anybody done that? No! (Follow up interview)

Instructional Objectives of the Ensemble Directors

Unique, Genuine Teaching and Learning Experiences

The ensemble directors shared various instructional objectives that have been highly shaped by the historical, cultural, and social contexts of the music that they teach. These objectives have given rise to distinct frameworks for teaching and learning at the School of Music, each deeply rooted in the cultural traditions they represent. Therefore, many of the teaching and learning objectives within these ensembles could be unique and distinct from the prevailing practice within Western classical music settings. In addition to cultivating the aural-oral tradition of music learning, the instructors shared a common goal of upholding their vibrant musical heritage. They are driven by the collective objectives of fostering inclusivity in learning, facilitating individual growth, and nurturing a sense of community.

Dr. Cecilia emphasized the necessity for a distinctive pedagogy in music education, one that exceeds mere instructional materials. Her instructional goals in her Old-Time Ensemble challenge the notion of "perfectionism" that has been tightly upheld by many educators in Western classical music. Dr. Cecilia aims for promoting a participatory approach where the goal is active involvement and connection with others through music. Dr. Cecilia prioritizes inclusion, participation, and the shared exchange of knowledge, striving to foster a sense of community and personal growth in participatory musical experiences.

Dr. Cecilia: I think it's so important in music education that we recognize that the pedagogy has to be different. That not just the materials are different, but the actual way

155

we invite students to be in community with us through that music, it has to be different. It cannot just be that the goal of playing fiddle is that you come into university, you're like a decent violin player, and the goal of all of your study is so that you go from being like a decent violin player to like top of the pyramid… I want our systems to reflect that the goal is not to be the best, but to participate. The more you participate, it's just natural, the better you're going to get. The longer you stay in it, the more effort you put into it, the better you're going to get. But, that is not actually the goal. The goal is not actually to sound like the best fiddle player or win a fiddle contest or whatever… The goal is to smile at a stranger. The goal is to make that connection with somebody else through music. That is the thing I worry about the most… It should be about inclusion. It should be about participation. It should be about sharing what we know and what we want to learn with the maximum amount of people possible when we're engaging in participatory music. (First interview)

The teaching philosophy of Dr. Cecilia has been shaped by the way she learned old-time music. Therefore, she strives to connect her students with genuine ways of learning old-time music. By encouraging students to participate in the broader musical community beyond the confines of the School of Music, she aims to empower them to develop interpersonal bonds and lasting connections through music.

Dr. Cecilia: I started in the School of Music and then went outside of those walls to play in the community and with other people. But I always was still in Old-Time Ensemble because that was where I was learning most of the tunes and then going out into jams and hearing those tunes and learning tunes from the jams and then bringing those tunes from the jams back to class…The object of my teaching is to get everybody else to go outside

156

of the School and do this… The whole goal of the class is like get them to go to stuff out in the community because that was the thing that totally changed me as a player. Now because I was changed as a player, I was changed as a teacher. The object of the teaching has to be like you can do this for the rest of your life, and the only thing it requires is an inquisitive mind and the desire to want to make connection with people through music because that's really how you learn the most is by making connections with other people. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia emphasized the importance of learning vernacular American music through oral tradition and by ear, rather than relying solely on written notation. She discouraged the use of music sheets in her rehearsal as well as during performances because her teaching focus has been on nurturing relationships and cultivating a deep connection between students, their music, and collective knowledge.

Dr. Cecilia: Most people who are getting into playing vernacular American [music] understand that eventually they shouldn't be learning from music notation. They should be learning by using their ears through oral tradition. I just cut that out entirely, and I can tell when they learn it from sheet music. But yeah, they are not allowed to use chord charts on the day of a performance because they've got to use their ears to do most of that stuff… Most of our music is not written down, so the way that you learn the music is by making connections with other people. How can I record you playing this tune really quickly and then asking them, where did you learn that tune? Then, we all become these living repositories of hundreds of years of knowledge and how it all accumulates... It's the relationships that you help to cultivate with the students and with the students towards their music and towards their musicianship. (First interview)

Similarly, Mr. Rohan emphasized that his teaching philosophy reflects the way he learned Indian music. He highlighted the significance of the oral tradition in his art, where knowledge is transmitted orally from the Guru (i.e., a spiritual teacher). This approach involves memorizing music and feeling it by heart, which contrasts with the practice of playing while reading from written notation. He drew an analogy with exams in other subjects, emphasizing that for musicians, the true assessment occurs during live performances when musicians memorize their music, challenging the need for reliance on music notation.

> **Mr. Rohan:** It's the training, how we have been trained, that impacts the teaching… The impact is how we are trained in a particular form of art… This knowledge is something which comes out from the mouth of the Guru, so it's an oral tradition. We had to learn by heart all the compositions. Then, that is the way I pass it on. It's not that you read something and play. For example, when we give an exam for chemistry or biology, how do we give that exam? We go there and write the paper without the book with us. What is the real test for a musician? Performing in front of the audience. That is the real test for a musician. Why should we have that piece of paper in front of us?

Through my observation and engagement with Mr. Rohan's book on Indian music, I realized that Indian music possesses a distinct notation system with its own vocabulary and structure. However, this system is relatively rudimentary and doesn't capture the nuanced stylistic and structural aspects of Indian music performance. As a result, both Max and I found it necessary to rely on Mr. Rohan's live demonstrations and playing (or recorded performances) to imitate the accurate performance style and adhere to the correct form and structure of the pieces. We found that we need to feel the music to play it in the proper way (field notes from observation).

Max: It's not really the same thing with Indian classical where you've seen they have their version of the solfège syllables written down. You can read that, and still there is definitely a disconnect. When professor [Rohan] says, if you're looking at the sheet music in Indian Classical Ensemble, you're not going to play it right. You have to memorize it and really feel it and then you will play it right and also practice obviously.

Mr. Rohan clarified, both during the observation and our interview, that the Indian music notation primarily serves as a supplementary tool for learning, aiding students in grasping pitches and rhythms for memorization purposes, but it does not come into play during actual performances.

Mr. Rohan: Students can use the book, but while performing, they cannot! They can learn it [the music piece], remember it from the book. The book is there when they forget something. They can refer to the book in that way. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan also highlighted the importance of both collective unity, the "sum," and individual expression in Indian music. Mr. Rohan emphasized that even within group performance settings, it is important to spotlight the unique qualities of each instrument. Therefore, during his rehearsal, Mr. Rohan teaches his students how to play a piece of music together, and then within the piece, different instruments can each take a passage and play it as solo or improvise over it (field notes from observation).

Mr. Rohan: Now in Indian classical, we respect the sum, but individual identity is also important. We believe that every instrument is important. For example, we have orchestras, chamber orchestras in Indian classical also, where you have several instruments playing at the same time, but during that chamber orchestra also, emphasis should be given to individual instruments. There should be pieces, for example, there is a

159

violin, there is a cello, a flute, a sarod, all of those things playing, then individual

instruments also should come out. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan further expressed his dedication to preserving and transmitting the traditional

ways of Indian music that he learned. One of his teaching goals was to ensure the continuity of

this musical heritage to future generations. He regarded himself as a link in a chain, passing on

the knowledge to all his students, whom he prefers to consider as his own children (not students)

and an extended family. He was confident that this lineage will persist beyond his lifetime,

carried forward by his students, thus safeguarding the legacy of Indian music.

Mr. Rohan: Those were some of the traditional ways in which I learned, and that is what

I am passing it on. It was just about passing on this tradition to the next generation. That

is what I am trying to do here. I try to pass this thing [Indian music] on to the next

generation. And yes, this will continue. After me also, it will continue because I have

children and when I say children, that means all my students… All I have is an extended

family and after I'm long gone, they will pass it on to the next generation. So, this will

remain! (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo indicated a certain connection to Trinidad's steelpan culture through family

ties and childhood experiences spent in the Caribbean. Despite not being native to Trinidad,

being from the Caribbean has provided Dr. Llanzo with a sense of affinity and understanding of

the steelpan's cultural significance. This personal connection enhanced his teaching objectives

and underscored his commitment to imparting this musical tradition. He emphasized that his

teaching goes beyond mere aesthetics, as he imparts knowledge rooted in a genuine cultural

context that holds personal importance to him.

Dr. Llanzo: I'm not from Trinidad where the instruments are from, but I'm from [the Caribbean], which is the region. In many ways, I have family from Trinidad, so I've spent a lot of time there from when I was a child. It's like a second home. I think being from [the Caribbean], I'm more connected to the culture of steelpan... When I'm talking about it and I'm doing it, it's coming from a place of experience… I think it's more beneficial. I'm not just teaching this because it's cool music. I actually grew up with this within a kind of a cultural context where it was important. (First interview)

Likewise, the manner in which Dr. Llanzo engaged with steelpan music through community ensembles in the Caribbean has highly contributed to the development of his teaching philosophy and his objectives for the Steelpan Ensemble at the School of Music. Dr. Llanzo drew on his experience from community steelpan ensembles in the Caribbean, where the aural-oral teaching method was prevalent. Thus, he integrated this communal approach into his teaching practice at the School of Music, prioritizing the shared learning experience and the mutual nature of teaching and learning. He valued this process, even if it requires more time, as it cultivates a deeper understanding and connection among his students.

Dr. Llanzo: One of the things that helped me a lot was [community steelpan ensembles in the Caribbean] taught by rote. They would tap out the rhythms, get you to have the rhythm, and then they would tell you the notes. Sometimes, somebody might play it and then get you to play it, or sometimes it might teach one person and get that one person to teach everybody else. Everybody was just kind of learning and teaching as they went along. That experience really built a sense of community amongst the players. I try to incorporate that when I'm teaching in the US. I don't worry too much about the time it takes because I think there's something to learn by even paying attention to what other

161

people are learning or making sure that when you're learning, you're also trying to teach

somebody else and make sure that they're learning it too. (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo also emphasized the importance of developing a strong sense of musical

feeling, memorization, and synchronization among students. Therefore, he does not use music

sheets in his teaching approach. Dr. Llanzo also does not use notation because he considers the

diverse student body with varying levels of music reading skills and aims to create an inclusive

and accessible learning environment in his ensemble that allows all students, regardless of their

musical background, to engage and participate effectively.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I think students need more to learn to feel music, memorize music, and lock
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> in with each other, so I don't use sheet music here at all. Plus, because this is a University
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> where there are different majors on campus, I want it to be accessible to people who
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> don't read music, or to students who don't read music here. I want that experience. (First
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> interview)

Beyond Mere Musical Performance

The ensemble directors highlighted that their pedagogical aims within these ensembles

extend beyond mere musical performance. Their instructional objectives prioritized a holistic

approach that encouraged students to interact with music through diverse avenues, fostering a

comprehensive understanding of its theoretical, historical, social, and cultural dimensions. These

goals stand in contrast to Western classical music ensemble environments, where students often

focus solely on rehearsing and performing from sheet music, without engaging in additional

activities or exploring broader musical knowledge, with the primary goal of achieving a polished

final performance.

162

Dr. Llanzo stressed that the objectives of university ensembles should serve a broader purpose beyond mere musical performance, and historical, social, and cultural contexts should be integrated within the instruction. He stressed this integration between multiple dimensions of music is crucial within a university environment, where knowledge creation involves not only physical practice but also thoughtful consideration of learning methods and their broader applications. Unlike conservatories ensembles focused solely on performing music, university ensembles should encourage a deeper understanding and application of music learning.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I don't think ensembles in a university setting are just about getting people to perform music. I think it's helping students to connect the practice of performance with some historical, social, cultural context. I really think that's important in a university. If you want to just play music, you can go to a conservatory. But in a university, this is a place where knowledge is produced, yes through the body, but you have to get students to think about what they're learning, how they're learning, and how it applies to something else. (First interview)

Therefore, Dr. Llanzo considered the objectives of his ensemble as a pathway to facilitate diverse musical engagements for his students. His instruction helps his student not just in playing music as they used to, but also in actively participating in different activities, such as rote learning, improvisation, arrangement, and making a deep connection to rhythms and their interplay. Dr. Llanzo mentioned that his approach aims to benefit both music and non-music students, allowing them to experience and comprehend musical culture through embodied performance. Dr. Llanzo also employs techniques like "vocalization" (although the students are considered instrumentalists) and rhythmic clapping to enhance understanding and feeling concepts like syncopation, groove, and flow.

163

Dr. Llanzo: I am providing a means for students to engage music in a different way than they're used to. They're able to do things by rote. Sometimes, they can do improvisation. Sometimes, they can participate in the arrangement… the types of rhythms that we're doing musically, types of rhythms and the way the rhythms connect with each other, the way that you have to listen to each other to get these rhythms, and the way that you have to use your body when you're playing… I'm getting them to feel different rhythms and listen in different ways. That's important to music students. It's also important to non-music students to be able to experience music without having formal training and being able to learn about the whole culture through performance practice. I feel it in their bodies, some of the things that we're talking about, syncopation or groove or flow… I sometimes get them to sing the parts if they're having trouble with it, or clap the parts, but sometimes sing it. Sometimes, I'll do them the words [have students sing lyrics or words]. Sometimes, we'll do the single lyrics when we're learning it. (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo also has made valuable efforts for blending theory, history, and culture with music practice to enrich his teaching approach. He used to stimulate discussions and enhance learning among students by having them reflect on assigned videos, documentaries, or songs. By drawing on his Trinidadian background, he usually shares cultural insights and historical practices, bridging theory and practice. Additionally, Dr. Llanzo intentionally chooses music that aligns with assigned readings to create a cohesive learning experience about instruments' development, community influence, and historical and cultural contexts. Dr. Llanzo emphasized that this multifaceted approach that he uses not only fosters the musical skill and knowledge of his students but contributes to aligning with the School of Music's mission statement.

Dr. Llanzo: Sometimes in the rehearsal, people go and watch a documentary in a different room and talk about it when they go back and play. Sometimes, something will come up in the rehearsal, and I say, the reason why I'm doing this is because, and so back in Trinidad, this is how they would do it, but they would also do it this way… I also recently have been choosing songs that connect to the reading that I give them. When we made the bamboo instruments and things, we made these tin can instruments, and I assign them a reading on the development of the steelpan and why and how people in Trinidad were making their own instruments. There was an article focused on the making of instruments in terms of the history. I would combine different things like that. The song, like one semester, we played on the arrangement of a song that was also singing about the people who created the instruments. I would connect the readings with some of those things… I think is really important to understand how this instrument develops and how the music is developed and how it facilitates community, but it's also connected to our history of colonialism and a struggle for independence and what that means. The debates are on what an independent nation should sound like. It's a good way to connect theory with practice, history with practice, which is something I like. I try to do more… There are many ways that I think what I'm doing is important to the mission of the School of Music. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan also emphasized the importance of encompassing theory, history, and cultural values along with the performance within his instruction of the Indian Ensemble. He emphasized the significance of teaching cultural traditions to provide a holistic understanding of Indian classical music that goes beyond mere musical techniques.

Mr. Rohan: I teach performance and theory, and I teach the history. If you look at the book, you will find the history of Indian classical music. We even teach the cultural values. Like, for example, I cannot touch this instrument with my foot. I cannot step over the instrument. I teach not just the music but cultural values of it and everything. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan stressed that integrating cultural values into his teaching is essential because Indian music exceeds mere entertainment and is deeply intertwined with life itself. He considers music as a way of life rather than a mere subject, and he holds strong principles about where and how it should be performed. Therefore, Mr. Rohan adheres to including cultural and traditional practices in his teaching so that he could help his students develop new ways of thinking about music and engage with music in ways that appropriately align with the social and cultural norms of Indian music.

Mr. Rohan: Indian music was never for entertainment. Now think about it. If you take the entertainment part out of music, then what remains? But as it was a subject, it is just a way of life… I do not perform at places where people have plates in their hand, where they eat and drink. I do not perform there, nor do I allow my students to do that. If you look at my website, there are conditions; there are frequently asked questions on the website in which I do not allow them; that my music is not for that reason. I don't do it for money. The real reason for music was not just the education but also the way of life… Traditionally, we sit on the floor and perform. Always you will see the carpet, but we don't allow shorts because if you sit on the floor, it's not proper. We like people to be closer to earth, okay? We believe in those five elements, earth, water, air, fire, and sky. Here all those things, so earth, we want people to be closer to earth. (First interview)

166

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Rohan tries to transfer similar perspectives that he received from his Guru into his ensemble. He highlighted how his Guru emphasized the importance of learning rhythm, particularly through the tabla, in order to better learn the sarod. By applying this perspective in the Indian Ensemble, students who play melodic instruments are expected to get basic training in the tabla during the beginning sessions, focusing on hand motions and rhythm cycles to ensure a foundational understanding of Indian rhythms. Hence, even from a musical perspective, students engage in a diverse range of activities.

> **Mr. Rohan:** My guru told me, and we don't ask questions when the Guru tells us something; we do it; he told me that if you want to learn the sarod, you must need to learn the tabla first… Indian classical is integrated with the rhythm. It's not like in Western classical, you can have the guitar person playing on stage all alone. In Indian classical, we will always have the tabla or the rhythm with it. He said that if you don't learn this thing, the tabla player will eat you live on stage in front of 300 people. Yes, in our [ensemble], for example at the [University], every student who is learning the sitar or the sarod has to learn some very basics of the tabla. Here we have shorter semesters, right? I can't expect the complete full mastery of it, but everybody has to learn it. In the first or second class itself, we start training the hand motions, like a 16- beat cycle. (First interview)

Similarly, during my observations of Old-Time and Steelpan rehearsals, I noticed how some students transitioned between instruments for various pieces. In the Old-Time Ensemble, certain students might play the guitar for one tune and then switch to the fiddle or banjo for another. In the Steelpan Ensemble, students shift between playing the "tenor pan" in one piece and then switching to the "cello pan" or a percussion instrument like the conga for another piece.

167

This flexible approach within these ensembles allows students to explore and learn different instruments during their enrollment, not sticking to one experience, yet encouraging further a varied and dynamic musical experience (field notes from observation).

Dr. Cecilia, as well, aims to provide her students with a comprehensive experience that covers various modes of engagement with music. To move away from engaging with formal performance processes linked to formal recitals, she tries to incorporate activities like jamming, dancing, singing, and active listening. Her goal in the Old-Tim Ensemble is to expose students to diverse ways of participating in music, moving beyond the stress of a single recital and encouraging ongoing interaction with the music.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I want to have the students get a valuable experience that shows all of the different ways that people participate in this music. That includes jamming; that sometimes includes performing; that includes dancing; that includes singing; that includes listening; that includes so many different ways of being with the music aside from just giving a recital and then being stressed out about it and then never engaging with that music again. You know, how often do I pull out Vaughan Williams Symphony number four just to have a good time? No, I'm not going to do that. I can't play the viola part in Vaughan Williams Symphony number four by myself and expect to have a good time just because I performed it once. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia added that she was enthusiastic about the idea of connecting the Old-Time Ensemble with a participatory dance in the community. She wanted to highlight the intrinsic relationship between music and dance, emphasizing how some music that she teaches was created for dancing. By doing so, students can gain a deeper understanding of the music's purpose and meaning. Dr. Cecilia envisioned this connection as a way to broaden students' engagement with

the music beyond traditional performance, fostering a unique and interactive experience where they play not for the sake of performance but for engaging with others.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I am very jazzed on this idea that Old-Time Ensemble is going to start partnering with a participatory dance ensemble in town so that we have that dance and music connectivity so that the students understand that the music exists because it was used for dancing. They'll understand the music better because they'll be dancing for it. There's multiple ways to engage with this music, and one of those ways is through dancing. It's not so much like a performance. They're not performing when they go to play at our concert dance on April 26. They're not going to be performing. They're going to be playing for a dance, and in my mind, that's an expressly different experience because I've experienced it.

Another objective of the Old-Time Ensemble was to cultivate a student-centered approach to teaching and learning. Dr. Cecilia's aspirations extended beyond mere acquisition and performance of tunes. Instead, she encouraged and guided her students to take on the role of teaching tunes to their peers by stimulating students to form bands and take ownership of their teaching and learning process. Dr. Cecilia mentioned that by fostering students' contributions in developing teaching resources for tunes, students can engage with collective learning experiences and provide valuable teaching resources for future students that reflect a shared "history of practice" and engagement.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I'm kind of moving them more towards being set in bands, and they choose. The bands choose together what they are going to call themselves; what tunes they are going to perform; how are they going to arrange them; and then come and share out and provide teaching resources for these tunes for future generations of Old-Time Ensemble

students. Instead of it being teaching in the moment, it's more about contributing to our

shared history of practice, because everything that they submit as a teaching resource, I

can put in our Canvas page and link it to a tune. So that next year when we all want to do

that tune, everybody can use the resources that that band submitted. We're all kind of

like, we're all included in the practice of teaching and learning in this space, and we're all

included in that history of practice. (First interview)

Creating a Welcoming, Inclusive, Safe Place

One of the key objectives of ensemble directors was to have these ensembles open and

accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, as discussed earlier. This

goal was deeply entrenched in their teaching philosophies. Their unwavering commitment to

openness and accessibility, especially by not having audition procedures that foster exclusion,

underscored the significance of these ensembles in bridging gaps and creating a welcoming, safe

space for all, not only in terms of racial, ethnic, and gender identities, but also in varied musical

backgrounds. Dr. Cecilia's dedication to openness and genuineness in her teaching approach

reflected her belief that music classes, like the Old-Time Ensemble, should not be subject to

auditions, as such practices can counteract the essence of these musical genres.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I am very, very deeply invested in our systems being as open and inclusive
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> and participatory as possible. Otherwise, we are going to "Other" ourselves. You know
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> what I mean? It has to… our systems to be true and authentic to who we are as
>
> practitioners within that community of practice. And for me, that means a class like an
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> Old-Time Ensemble should never be an auditioned ensemble. These types of music
>
> should never be auditioned. It only defeats the purpose. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia added that accepting students regardless of their musical backgrounds can create an inclusive space where these individuals can actively participate and find a sense of belonging within her ensembles.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: We are so open to having non-music majors in the ensemble. It [the Old-Time Ensemble] brings non-music majors into the building to do something participatory to see that like there is a space here for me and for some of our students maybe seeing themselves represented in an ensemble in a different way. (Follow up interview)

Mr. Rohan also embraced a welcoming and inclusive approach towards his Indian Music Ensemble, where individuals from various academic backgrounds can join the ensemble. He stressed his commitment to passing on the tradition of Indian music without imposing auditions, as guided by his Guru's advice. Thus, he indicated that he focuses on offering the opportunity to all and works with them as much as he can, leaving it to the students' determination and ability to develop and carry forward the music's essence.

> **Mr. Rohan:** No, it can be anything. In the last semester, we had a person who was doing his business administration and he was in my class, and he did fantastic… We used to have people from the community… We don't want to have audition, and I would like to pass this thing [Indian music] on to as many people as possible. My Guru had told one thing that I should not be saying no to anybody. Leave it up to them. You do your part. You give whatever you can. Afterwards, it's up to the child and his or her luck, whether they are able to grasp that and take it forward or not. It's my duty not to say no to anybody. (First interview)

As motioned earlier, Dr. Llanzo likewise wanted to ensure the accessibility and openness of his ensemble by welcoming individuals from diverse majors and backgrounds, especially those who may not have a background in reading music.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** Plus, because this is a university where there are different majors on campus, I want it to be accessible to people who don't read music, or to students who don't read music here. I want that experience… [Community members?] Sometimes, yeah. People contact me who are living in the area, who just want to play because they've played before. I would just like let them come in and join… This semester I have an employee. She's actually an employee in the School of Education. She does stuff with online education. I don't think she teaches, but she facilitates. She's like in the technology, and she's in her second semester. (First interview)

All three educators shared a common understanding that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. They prioritized creating a safe, inclusive, and less stressful environment, where the concept of "perfectionism" is not the goal of these ensembles, as discussed earlier.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I want the space and time that we have together, those two hours, every Tuesday it has to be the space that they feel safe. The place that they feel, , protected. They're going to make mistakes. That's okay. (First interview)

> **Dr. Llanzo:** Making a mistake, that doesn't bother me. It doesn't bother me. No, because not everybody is a music major… I mean, people make mistakes. This is not going to be their career… The goal of this isn't to be good performers or like efficient or proficient performers on the steelpan. That's not my goal. I don't want to penalize anybody for making a mistake on the stage… They have to memorize everything, which is another

172

reason it's hard to penalize because somebody weren't [sic] used to memorizing songs. Sometimes, I just forget bits and pieces. It happens! (First interview)

Mr. Rohan: Mistakes are fine. I am not against mistakes. We all make mistakes. Mistakes are okay. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia also emphasized her dedication to preventing hierarchical distinctions within her Old-Time Ensemble, where each participant's role and contribution are valued equally, promoting a sense of inclusivity and unity among ensemble members.

Dr. Cecilia: I don't want things that we do in Old-Time Ensemble to reinforce any sort of hierarchical; first chair violin; first violin; second violin; insert viola player here. I don't want that to happen in Old-Time Ensemble, and I work really hard to not have that happen. (First interview)

Coping with Instructional Challenges

Students' Varied Abilities and Backgrounds

As these ensembles reflect inclusive platforms and are open to all individuals, enrolled students could come from various musical, professional, and cultural backgrounds. Acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all instructional approach may not be suitable for these settings, the ensemble directors demonstrated valuable insights in handling this challenge and have embraced deliberate and thoughtful approaches to address the varying skill levels and backgrounds of their students. Through carefully developed processes and personalized interactions that reflect better knowledge about students' abilities and needs, these educators cultivated an atmosphere where all students, regardless of their proficiency, can actively engage and flourish. Dr. Cecilia approached this challenge with careful and strategic methods, She found that the first step to coping with various student backgrounds and musical skills was through

173

learning about her students. Thus, she administers a questionnaire at the start of each semester to learn about students' needs and abilities.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: How do I deal with it? Very cautiously and strategically. I send out at the beginning of every semester kind of introduce yourself little questionnaire they can post on a discussion thread if they feel comfortable doing that, or they can just email me privately. I want to know what instrument do you plan on playing? What experience do you have with this instrument already? Do you own one of these instruments, or do I need to help you find a way to procure this instrument? Are you already musical in another way that you're trying to bring to the ensemble? (First interview)

Then, Dr. Cecilia places her students in mixed groups to assess how different personalities collaborate, and next she appoints experienced students as leaders to guide newcomers. She tries to empower her students to become mentors, nurturing their self-efficacy and encouraging them to pass on their knowledge.

> **Dr. Cecilia:** I have to do a lot of digging early on and a lot of mixing them up in different groups and see how different personality works because it's personality stuff too. I have to have leaders within each ensemble that have been in the class before or have some sort of experience with music from the oral tradition or vernacular American music, or learning by ear. Then, I have to have those students train them up as they're going through the class to be like, okay, someday you're going to be for somebody else what that person was for you. It's a lot of cultivating their own self-efficacy so that then they can take on more kind of like the real world; the more you know, the more you people make you do. That's a lot of it is dealing with making strategic partnerships between students that have different levels of ability and experience. (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo also employs an observational approach during the first session of the class to measure students' abilities while having them play and try various instruments. This observation informs his decisions when assigning instruments to individuals, aiming to match their skills and build their confidence because he prioritizes avoiding situations where a student might struggle with a challenging part.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** One of the things that I do is I kind of observe people on the first day. I have them play different instruments to get a sense of what they can do, how quick they are. Then, I kind of try to put them on instruments that might suit their abilities based on what I saw because I don't want them to be holding apart where they're the only ones holding it if they're not confident. (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo added that he employs a flexible teaching approach during the semester, in which he could reassign instruments or rearrange sections. He constantly adjusts parts based on students' progress, sometimes decreasing complexity for struggling students and/ or increasing it for those who want to advance their skills and try new things. Thus, Dr. Llanzo doesn't differentiate between students' abilities; instead, she focuses on encouraging personal advancement.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** Sometimes, I just change the parts. If somebody's not getting it, I just simplify it…I give them simpler parts or move them around to a part where I think it might be more simple. I will sometimes challenge some students. I might give the melody to some people to play. If they haven't done it before, like, just play this melody. But if somebody can handle more, I might say, okay, I want you to play the melody and the harmony at the same time. Do it this way… I'm not making a distinction between those who can't do it and those who can. It's just like, if you want to challenge yourself, try this. I'm always editing things like that… That's just how it is in an ensemble where

175

people have different abilities. But for the most part, I do pay attention to it. I will

increase the difficulty of parts if I think they can handle it, and I will decrease the

difficulty, if they're struggling. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan also provides personalized instruction based on students' abilities and readiness to

play. He takes into consideration varying levels of difficulty in the assigned pieces, and to make

a balance, he guides some students to learn and play advanced parts while others learn simpler

ones. During the performance, advanced students play complex parts as a solo while everybody

joins and play the easy parts of a piece together. Mr. Rohan emphasizes individual progress and

doesn't hold students back based on others' abilities, highlighting the absence of a standardized

syllabus for all.

> **Mr. Rohan:** There are certain pieces, for example, the *todas* [a melodic line occurs at
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> different times in a piece but with slight variations in each occurrence], which we have.
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> [A student] will be playing the difficult *todas*. Other people are not ready for it. Some
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> people who are ready will be playing the *double lay* [a melodic line played at a double
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> speed during a piece], and at that point, other people stop. It's all about balancing about
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> everything. It's not about stopping a student or keeping him behind or her behind because
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> other people are not there. That child needs to progress as per his or her abilities. That's
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> why it's not a standard syllabus for everybody. (First interview)

The ensemble directors also encouraged peer teaching strategies to address the varying

musical skills and abilities of their students. Dr. Llanzo tries to foster a mutual learning dynamic

to stimulate students to teach and learn from each other. He places some students who may need

more support next to their advanced peers so they can learn from them and improve their skills.

176

Dr. Llanzo: So far, I haven't had too many problems because some students catch the music, or they learn the songs much quicker than others, or they're stronger on their parts individually than others are… I tend to try and pair people up as best as possible to make sure at least somebody who's playing a part if they're not confident or they don't have much experience, they're paired with somebody who may be able to catch it quicker… I get people to teach each other. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia also emphasized the role of near peers in bridging the gap between the different ability levels of her students and facilitating her task. She tries also to enhance the leadership aspects of her students through this process by having experienced individuals guide students who need extra assistance.

Dr. Cecilia: First, I will try and pair them with another student that they already kind of have a good relationship with to help them to do that... But the different ability level thing really is much more neatly solved. I think by having near peers do that … I love when I have students that play four or five different instruments because then I can have these swing hitters of like, this one plays guitar, fiddle, and banjo. I can put them in a band with two newer fiddle and banjo students because that's a student who's more experienced on both of these instruments and with making arrangements. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan, as well, encourages peer teaching by having "senior students help junior students" (First interview).

The instructors highlighted also that they address various students' needs by engaging with them in individual instruction settings. Dr. Cecilia used to organize individual sessions on

Fridays for her students who wanted to improve their skills. She expressed that she would be willing to devote more time to individual students if they would ask for more help!

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I used to have Friday meet up times for banjos to just have banjo time, or fiddles to just have fiddle time All the students had to do was let me know that they want to come, and they want to do fiddle time or banjo time or guitar or whatever. I would have a standing 9 a.m. meeting and then I would just be in practice rooms from like 10 to 3 o'clock some days just meeting up with students who wanted help learning tunes, or wanted to really dig into banjo stuff, or wanted coaching for their bands, or is working on a banjo technique. All they had to do was ask, and I would do it. (Follow up interview)

Dr. Llanzo explained how he schedules extra before the ensemble session and comes stays there for one hour before the class time to work with some students on their individual needs.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** The ensemble runs from five to seven. I usually book the room from four o'clock. Sometimes, I'm in there between four and five o'clock just to meet with people beforehand if they need extra help or something. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan uses two separate classrooms due to varying skill levels, and also because of the intersection between the learning paths of some instruments, as percussion instruments have different techniques than string instruments. As the rehearsal time has an overlap between different students' course levels and learning path, using an additional classroom would help in addressing individual needs.

> **Mr. Rohan:** We have two classrooms because of different levels, first of all. Then comes yes, while there is always an overlap [one session for all levels], tabla is considered a different section, not a section in the US terms, but it's a different path of learning. Rhythm has its own beauty, which needs to be emphasized. Then, the instruments also

have their own beauty. Both of them have different parts of learning, but then there is an

overlap thing also. I have two different classrooms to work with different things

individually. (Follow up interview)

The ensemble directors considered refraining from using standardized assessment

procedures because they recognize their potential limitations in effectively capturing the actual

learning experiences of their students. Dr. Cecilia expressed reservations about the conventional

grading system, perceiving it as potentially limiting and hierarchical. While recognizing that

every student is indeed learning valuable things within her ensemble, she resented the act of

labeling their progress with grades. Her frustration extends to the challenge of fairly evaluating

their learning within the confines of university norms and standards.

> **Dr. Cecilia:** I do still have to give grades, and I hate it, "abolish grades!" There is an
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> expectation for every professor, every ensemble, every professor on campus has to give
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> some sort of quantitative judgment on student learning. I know that every single one of
>
> these jokers is learning stuff. Look, I know like you can't be in that space and not be like,
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> I'm learning a lot of things that's impossible. I hate giving grades. I hate assigning value
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> to their learning. I hate trying to figure out how to do equitable assessments of what they
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> are learning in ways that our larger University systems deem as appropriate evaluations
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> of learning. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia added that she strongly opposes the concept of grades, viewing them as a form of

oppression. She expressed a desire to eliminate grades entirely and instead implement a self-

reflection approach for assessment, believing it would encourage students to strive for personal

growth. Dr. Cecilia finds grades to be symbolic of an unequal power dynamic between educators

and students, contributing to her ongoing challenges in developing suitable assessment methods

for her class.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I kind of think that grades are tyranny. Because I hate grades, I just would do
> away with all of them if I could and just have students do self-reflections on how much
> they're growing because then I think that they would work a lot harder. I think they
> would work a lot harder for their own growth if they knew that that was how they were
> being graded… I have a tough time with assessment in this class, and I think grades are
> tyranny. I think a lot of the times that grades are used is part of a fortified power dynamic
> between teacher and student. (Follow up interview)

Nevertheless, Dr. Cecilia continues to find worth in her approach to assessment, as she

endeavors to immerse her students in the rich history of old-time music, aiming to provide them

with a more meaningful and comprehensive learning experience. In other words, she uses her

class assignments as a tool to help her students learn more about old-time music and its historical

and cultural contexts, not primarily to give them grades. This was also the main purpose of

making class assignments by the other directors.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: But, they're still getting this kind of value out of the assignments because I
> don't want to lose the historical understanding of… we're embedded within this history
> of practice. (First interview)

Dr. Cecilia incorporated a mixed range of assignments for her students (retrieved from Old-Time

Ensemble Syllabus: Spring Semester 2023 on Canvas online course management system). These

assignments included listening and reading assignments, a research project about one of the class

tunes, creating instructional materials for two tunes, and practice and progress demonstration in

learning one tune by providing a video recording playing that tune. There were not any sorts of

conventional rubrics for the practice and progress demonstration assignment as its purpose was for evaluating the progress of the students, not the technical skills of their performance. The final performance and other public performances did not have any grading criteria, as their goal was to enhance students' engagement with the community more than assessment. All assignments were shared on a Canvas discussion board, fostering a collaborative and collective learning environment among students.

Dr. Llanzo employed an adaptable evaluation approach for his students. He utilized a contract grading system, outlining specific workload criteria for achieving different grades. Grading criteria reflected factors such as attendance, participation, and the completion of reading assignments. Dr. Llanzo explained that he doesn't assess his students based on their musical performance or mastery of repertoire extensively due to their limited practice opportunities as newcomers to the instrument. He also raised concerns about the appropriateness of time expectations for credit allocation, expressing uncertainty about whether it's reasonable to demand excessive commitments from students for a single credit. Thus, Dr. Llanzo aimed for his students to engage deeply in the process of learning music rather than focusing solely on performance outcomes.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I think I have a very loose rubric or something. How do I evaluate them? It's just based on participation, attendance, and that they submitted the reading assignments. Satisfaction. I have a contract grading. To get a B, you have to do this amount of work. To get an A, you have to get this amount of work. I don't grade them on how well they play or how well they master the repertoire because they're new to the instrument and they don't really have opportunities to practice as much… I have issues about how much

time people should spend for one credit as well. I don't know if it's fair to expect too

much... I want them to really pay attention to the process of learning... (First interview)

The contract grading criteria were negotiated collaboratively and determined between Dr. Llanzo

and his students during Spring 2023 to foster greater student engagement and ownership in their

learning, as well as to include them as an essential part of the decision-making process of the

class (retrieved from Steelpan Ensemble Syllabus: Spring Semester 2023 on Canvas). The course

syllabus did not? include any standardized rubrics for performance. Besides the mentioned

criteria above, there was a discussion board task on Canvas page where students were asked to

bring ideas about the song that they want to learn in the subsequent rehearsal. Also, students

were assigned to write a self-reflection about their learning experience in the Steelpan Ensemble

during the semester.

Mr. Rohan also utilized a flexible assessment system that was mainly based on students'

varied abilities because he teaches two section levels in one class. Mr. Rohan evaluated students

on their ability to perform the given music, as well as on their understanding of the theoretical

and cultural aspects of Indian music through a theory test. Mr. Rohan highlighted that the use of

the theory test emphasizes the deep connection between musical performance and

comprehension of the music theoretically and culturally. However, the practical (i.e.,

performance) evaluation and theory test were based on different student levels, as each student

was evaluated based on the musical training and knowledge that they received.

Mr. Rohan: There are two exams: one is theory and one practical. The theory because

whatever you play, you should be able to write it down. Okay, and write it down in a

proper organized manner. You connect the performance with understanding to the

music... There are several questions with the cultural aspects also, and that is important

because that forms the basis of the music. All those things are also there. . . Now as far as

different levels of students are concerned, they are evaluated differently in practical. In

theory, sometimes yes, we give different questions for them because they will be learning

different things. (Follow up interview)

The course syllabus reflected different objectives and criteria for different student levels: one for

beginners and one for advanced (retrieved from Indian Ensemble Syllabus: Spring Semester

2023 on Canvas). There were common concepts, musical components, and pieces were assigned

to all students, and the more advanced aspects were assigned only to the students at the higher

levels. The students were evaluated accordingly. The students were also tasked with reading Mr.

Rohan's Indian Classical Music textbook. Additionally, the most important criterion of the final

practical exam was that students should be evaluated while performing from memory in front of

an audience. There was no one standard rubric to evaluate the performance of the practical exam

for all students. Instead, each student was evaluated based on the skill levels and techniques that

they received during the semester.

Through my examination of the assignments and learning materials accessible on the

Canvas webpages of these ensembles, I gained insights into the efforts of the ensemble directors

in making a balance in their instructional practices to reflect and connect musical, historical, and

cultural facets intrinsic to the music they teach. While certain students may possess familiarity

with these musical traditions, many others might remain unfamiliar. I realized how the

assignments and learning materials played a pivotal role in aiding the ensemble directors to

embrace the diverse musical and cultural backgrounds of their students. These resources

functioned as a tool for cultural responsiveness, fostering increased familiarity and heightened

awareness of the music and its cultural dimensions (field notes from observation).

During rehearsals, I observed instances where the directors usually paused to illuminate particular musical, historical, or cultural elements, often associated with the week's assigned readings, listening, or other tasks. These interludes not only unraveled the intricacies of the music but also anchored them in broader contexts. Moreover, the directors were active in sharing personal stories and transferring their own musical journeys, highlighting significant events tied to specific music compositions or songs, and expanding upon the social and cultural significances that underscored certain performance styles. I felt how this approach effectively immersed students in the cultural milieu, ensuring they didn't feel like strangers or outsiders within the classroom. That's how I felt. I didn't have the sensation of being a stranger observer; instead, I felt like a member of these ensembles, particularly, because both the ensemble directors and students made efforts to involve me in their class contexts, both in terms of performance and cultural aspects (field notes from observation).

Formal Performance Concerns

A prominent and robust norm within the School of Music centers around formal performance, as the School has been tightly driven by the Western classical music canon. This norm has become a fundamental aspect of the expectations held by the majority of students when they enroll in courses involving performance elements, such as instrumental or vocal studio classes, as well as choir or ensemble classes. Ruby's comment exemplified this expectation.

> **Ruby:** I always know there is a performance at the end of the semester, even from
> classical training. There is always a jury, or a solo performance, or recital.

Ian initially approached the Old-Time Ensemble with the assumption that it would follow a similar performance-oriented pattern. However, his perspective shifted after he enrolled in the Old-Time Ensemble.

Ian: Before I was in the know of Old-Time Ensemble, before like I embedded myself in

it, I didn't know that it wasn't a performance art. I was expecting like, we are going to

learn these tunes and we are going to get them super good and perform them at the end.

That's what I thought at first, but now I go in there just ready to play.

In addition to students' expectations, incorporating performances might also become part of

students' beliefs and needs. Max believes that music inherently involves performance, and he

highlighted how important gaining performance experience is even in unfamiliar settings or

traditions. He indicated that this exposure to diverse musical contexts and pushing one's comfort

zone is valuable and crucial for the overall development of a musician, particularly for those

aspiring to perform.

Max: I think music is like, it's a performance… I think having these opportunities to

perform in the settings that we perform in here is really valuable, and having performance

experience doing things that you aren't comfortable with is really vital to my

development as a musician… I think just the entire idea of forcing you to perform music

that you might not be super familiar with, or in a tradition that you were not raised in, I

think even that is just helpful for someone who wants to perform it also.

Hence, the matter of concluding each semester with a performance, especially in a formal way,

has raised concerns and considerable deliberations among ensemble directors, as well as other

educators within the School of Music.

Dr. John emphasized the need to critically evaluate the concept of formal performances

due to various reasons. He indicated that forcing diverse music genres into a formal recital hall

setting might distort their essence and cater more to established Western classical music norms

rather than fostering diversity and inclusivity. Dr. John pointed out an example of how this

approach could affect genres like old-time music which will hinder its purposes and make it confined to a Western classical music model if it is performed in the recital hall; whereas if students participated in community-oriented events, that would align better with the origins and nature of old-time music.

> **Dr. John:** I think there's all sorts of reasons why we should critique the formal concert. There's lots of music that don't operate in the formal concert hall space. If you want to explore those, then explore them, but to squish them into a concert hall might actually be distorting them in ways that serve the music establishment and not the goals of diversity or inclusion or different musical perspectives. Old-time music, to put it on a stage where people are sitting down quietly listening to this aesthetic object and looking at a program, that's a Western classical music model that old-time music is squishing into. That actually serves the Western classical tradition in ways that doesn't necessarily serve the students who you might be wanting to give a diverse idea of what music can do. Maybe instead of a recital, expect all the students go to [a local] Fiddle Festival for the weekend and could join a jam session in that because that's actually the origins of the tradition or the more community-oriented part of the tradition.

Dr. John also discussed the challenges of preparing students in different ensembles for recitals. He mentioned that smaller ensembles that use sheet music can manage recitals, like the Middle Eastern Ensemble. On the other hand, it's more complex for ensembles like the Indian Ensemble where memorization is required, and many students grapple with fundamental aspects of their instruments. The short timeframe for preparation can lead to basic skill gaps and potential embarrassment on stage. Despite these challenges, Dr. John acknowledged that might be value in

pushing students to perform in public but also suggested there are alternative approaches to achieve similar goals.

> **Dr. John:** I mean it's tough. You use sheet music for most of your stuff, and you have a reasonably small ensemble. You're able to pull off a recital. The Indian Ensemble, the Indian group where they're not supposed to be playing with music, they're supposed to memorize everything. They can barely hold the instrument. To get to the level of playing a recital in two months, it's pretty rudimentary. It might just also set the student up for embarrassment because it's actually. . . the learning curve is really steep. It takes a while to learn the very basics of how to hold the instrument and how to pluck it. Unless you plucked strings before, the sitar is a pretty wacky instrument. I think [Mr. Rohan] likes to do that just to push the students, but there's other ways.

However, Dr. John indicated that having recitals might be beneficial in a way that might increase the awareness of other students of the existence of these ensembles within the School and help them realize that there are alternative musical forms and styles that they can engage with at the School.

> **Dr. John:** I think on a more sort of micro scale there is something about having recitals or bringing things into class, or students just getting exposed to put it in the air so that people realize, ah, there's something else that exists here.

All the ensemble directors expressed comparable perspectives to Dr. John, and they offered their insights into addressing the issue of public performance within their ensembles.

Mr. Rohan indicated that it is important for his students to perform in front of an audience because he believes that public performance is the "real test for musicians." Although he tries to provide his students with opportunities for performances, he limited them to be within

educational and religious settings where eating and drinking do not occur because, as mentioned earlier, that is not appropriate in his culture. Thus, students must commit to not performing Indian music that they learn with Mr. Rohan in venues where eating and drinking take place.

> **Mr. Rohan:** We generally try to have that thing [performance] every semester. It's not required I think, but I feel that the best test for a musician is a performance. Our student should be performing somewhere. Occasionally, I try to give them opportunities to perform because I don't perform at everywhere, house concerts and all those things. We do not do that. My students have several limitations because I take that first promise from them that they will not be performing at places where people eat and drink. That reduces several places of performance for them. I try wherever they can be performing only in educational institutions, religious places where people don't eat and drink. These are the only two places where any concert halls obviously, so these are the places we perform. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan indicated specific guidelines for performances, such as no sheet music, food, or drinks during performances. He clarified that eating and drinking might be disrespectful to his students. Thus, he welcomed both appreciation and criticism from the audience but stressed the importance of not ignoring the students' efforts.

> **Mr. Rohan**: I always say that yes, people can come and appreciate my students, and people can come and criticize my students. Both are fine with me, but they cannot come and ignore my students. Then if they are eating, they are ignoring. I want them to be attentive, appreciate or criticize. Both are welcome, but don't ignore my students because they have worked hard for it. (First interview)

Mr. Rohan stated several reasons why he does not prefer to do his end-of-the- semester performance in the recital hall and prefers smaller places. He mentioned that the trend of low attendance at student concerts might lead students to perform in an empty place, which is not encouraging. On the other hand, having the performance in a small place like the lecture hall would offer a more intimate and familial settings that foster a sense of closeness and engagement between the students and the audience.

> **Mr. Rohan:** In the recital hall, you see that not too many people come to an Indian classical student concert. Unless an artist is performing, or if I am performing, then you will have more people coming. But unfortunately, that is the trend that for student concerts, not too many people come. The lecture hall gave us a close family-type atmosphere in a shorter environment. It did not look too much empty. Because in a big concert hall for students' concerts, you can't have 200 people, and then, it would all be empty, plus we were not getting the dates which we wanted on Saturday. Due to all those reasons, we made it in the lecture hall, which is a very nice place. (Follow up interview)

Mr. Rohan indicated that student enrollment also might have an impact on having a big concert. He explained that it might be challenging to hold a concert for a long duration within a small group especially if they are new. Unlike returning students who could perform for a longer duration, new students typically had limitations in their performance endurance.

> **Mr. Rohan:** We did it in the classroom because one of the reasons was that we had less students. We had less people joining us. We did not have a big group at that point. It was very small group, plus we had plenty of new students. The repeating students can perform for a longer time period, but new students generally cannot perform for a long time

period. That would be one of the reasons why we had it in a classroom. (Follow up interview)

Mr. Rohan further indicated that he takes into consideration serval factors before involving his new students in a big concert. He explained how his decision is influenced by class time, memorization requirements, the complexity of the instruments, and the musical performance aspects. Mr. Rohan emphasized that while new students are introduced to various aspects during one semester, two hours once a week, a full concert with a large audience might not be appropriate.

> **Mr. Rohan:** Sometimes when you have new students, they cannot, especially with one semester, they cannot develop skills on the sarod. They cannot learn too much. You can just forget the idea of making big concert and just keep it close, intimate with the faculty member or family. Plus, our music does not allow students to read and play. They have to remember. That adds one more layer of complexity. Plus, the rhythm, they can't play alone. They have to play with the rhythm. Think about how many new concepts they will be learning in one semester only. This class runs for just one day. It's not that we have a full dedicated everyday class for this. What happens is this, they have to learn the instrument which is new; they have to learn the subject which is new; they have to learn the oral tradition and they have to perform with the tabla; all of those things. It takes at least two semesters for a child to be confident enough. I do throw them in deep waters in the first semester also, not in front of an audience, big audience or something. Because if they are not able to play and perform, then throwing them in deep waters is not the right thing. They lose their confidence. It's better to be sometimes a bit patient and give them an opportunity at the right time and place. (Follow up interview)

190

Dr. Llanzo approaches end-of-semester performances with flexibility and a focus on the learning process rather than just the final concert. Therefore, he does not usually have a concert at the end of each semester. Sometimes we do a joint concert between Steelpan and Middle Eastern Ensembles because oftentimes we have an issue with the length of our repertoire. By doing a joint concert, we can divide the concert time between the two ensembles. Plus, Dr. Llanzo and I love to collaborate in making an arrangement for one piece to be played by both ensembles. Dr. Llanzo further explained how repertoire, memorization of music, and limited practice time can be challenging. Again, he emphasized that the journey of learning and improving is the central goal of his ensemble, rather than the end product of a performance.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** Sometimes I have an end-of-semester performance. Sometimes I don't. Sometimes I do a concert with the Middle Eastern Ensemble. Sometimes I don't. I don't want to always have this idea that the purpose of the ensemble is to have a performance. There are lots of issues with that. Repertoire is one. We don't read music. We only play it once a week, so it takes a longer time to put it together. I don't have a full concert and program really because that's not the purpose. A lot of it the process of learning is really what I'm focused on than the final outcome. I can kind of relax, take my time, not worry too much about the final product, or try to get too many songs. But can we groove together? Can we play this piece and stay together without slowing down or speeding up? Can we feel it? Can we feel these rhythms and so they're connected to each other? Yeah. Also, can we use our wrists? Can we develop the right touch on the instrument? That's also something. There's some amount of technique I do. Not a whole lot, but like can you get that even tone on your plane? Not too loud, not too soft. Yeah. That's one of the process things, not the product. (First interview)

Dr. Llanzo further explained that there are no cultural issues with the formal concert because both formal and informal performances exist in the Caribbean. One of his concerns about holding formal concerts in the recital hall was due to the pressure and certain expectations associated with such settings on his students and himself. While recognizing the potential value of formal performances in shaping students' perceptions of the steelpan as more than just an informal instrument, Dr. Llanzo was cautious about subjecting his beginner students to unnecessary pressure and large tasks in their early learning stages. Thus, he leaned towards more informal performance opportunities that align with the learning objectives of the course and help his students recognize the various performance settings of steelpan.

> **Dr. Llanzo:** I don't know if I always want to do formal concerts in the recital hall with beginners because we don't have a full set anyway. Once we're in the recital hall, there's this feeling that it's a concert, and it has to be at a certain standard. That's a lot of pressure both for me and for the students. For one credit, for an instrument that people are just learning for the first time, I just right now don't want to put them under that kind of pressure, even though I recognize that performing is helpful. I just rather do something more informal so that we don't feel the need to perform, to learn a lot of songs. We can just learn one or two if we want, but we're still learning. It's a course we're learning. There are other ways to demonstrate your learning in an ensemble than to have an official concert, I believe. There are other ways. I'm trying to figure out what are the best ways to do that. That can still be appropriate to the learning objectives of the course... In the Caribbean people do that all the time. Not all the time, but people have concerts, like formal concerts. That's a thing. I don't see anything wrong with it. It's just not the only way that steelpan is consumed. In the Caribbean, people know that steelpan is also on the

192

street for carnivals in different kinds of parties or things like that or events. Steelpan
exists in multiple places, not just in the concert hall. There are multiple things. In an ideal
world, I would love to have students get multiple performance opportunities in concert
halls to see what it's like to place steelpan in a formal setting because that does exist in
the Caribbean, but also in more informal settings… By only doing it in informal settings,
I am worried that they only see it as an informal instrument. But at the same time, I just
don't think right now I need to be doing concerts. (Follow up interview)

Nevertheless, Dr. Llanzo expressed satisfaction with his last performance held in a big room. He
was able to effectively educate the audience about steelpan and engage them in the performance
in various ways, as well as "share" the progress and accomplishments of his students during the
semester. Thereafter, he preferred to call this experience, "sharing," rather than a concert.

Dr. Llanzo: Doing it like what we did last year [end of Spring 2023] in the room, people
could walk around the band, and they could really look and see how people are playing.
They could stand up beside people. They could dance. People felt like they could dance.
They could enjoy themselves. I could get the audience involved. I brought instruments
for them to play, so they could play percussion as well. I was able to get the audience
involved more to give the audience a different kind of experience because they don't
know about steelpan. They're able to learn more about it by having them come into our
space. I think I was able to do more education to the audience, whereas a recital, I don't
know. You can, but it's not the best way for me... This is like the final project showcase
as opposed to a concert or recital. We're just showing people what we learned. We're
sharing! It's a sharing of what we are. I want to think of it more of a sharing than as a
performance, like this is what we learned. This is where we are right now. We're not

saying that we are a polished ensemble representing steelpan music in the Caribbean, but this is where we've reached so far in the semester based on what we've done. This is what we've learned. We just want to share it with you and bring you in and see what we can teach you. That's kind of how I'm thinking about it. (Follow up interview)

Dr. Cecilia highlighted the unique nature of old-time music, emphasizing that it isn't primarily meant for presentation. Therefore, she encourages a more inviting and participatory approach in her end of the semester performances. Dr. Cecilia stimulates her students to talk about themselves and share what they have done with the audience, fostering a deeper connection between them. She tries to empower her students as representatives of the ensemble by allowing them to select most of the repertoire. She wants to maintain a balance by minimizing performance-related stress and boosting more participatory activities.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: This is not presentational music. If you make us do a recital, we're just going to sit on the stage and jam. I always feel a little weird about like the presentational aspect of old-time music. I try to make it as inviting as possible. The students all talk about the tunes that they've chosen and who they are and their experiences when they do a recital when we do our end of term performance. Because I want people to join us, the best way to do that is to have the students talk about what they do and why they choose our repertoire. I choose one, two things every term. They choose everything else, so having them kind of be the spokespeople for and their conditions to give performances because they're all like music majors. You know what I mean? They're used to music being something that you perform for other people. I'm trying to sort of balance that with more participatory things as I am in charge of the ensemble for longer. I don't want them to stress out about another performance. I try and make it as chill as I can, and then also

194

have other things that they do that are strictly participatory and are not about performing.

(First interview)

Dr. Cecilia emphasized that recital halls are less conducive to participatory dynamics due to the physical separation between performers and the audience. Dr. Cecilia stressed the importance of creating a sense of community and connection during performances. She indicated that her approach of engaging with the audience, such as "smiling at strangers," had a positive influence. Therefore, she prefers venues like the Organ Hall where the distinction between performer and audience can be blurred through interactive elements like seated square dances and inviting the audience to sing along. This approach aligned with her goal of fostering a more inclusive and participatory atmosphere during musical events.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: I did get a lot more people being like, I smiled at a stranger and I think that's something that we will do in every performance turned out on just having that sort of we feel like community when we're together and so having the audience feel like they actually are participating with us. It's one of the reasons that I hate doing recitals in the recital hall because that place is so big and they're sitting in these seats and there's such this big separation from the audience and the performers. I love the Organ Hall because you can really just decimate that distinction between who's in the audience and who's a performer by having like a seated square dance or inviting them to always sing along with you. (Follow up interview)

This approach aligned with her goal of fostering a more inclusive and participatory atmosphere during her musical events. Also, Dr. Cecilia focuses on nurturing "a community of practice" within her Old-Time Ensemble, emphasizing the continuity and connection between past and present participants. She highlighted this through the tradition of including former students in

195

ensemble performances, where they join current students on stage. This practice symbolized a lineage of musicians who passed through the ensemble and moved on to various roles in the music world. By maintaining this connection, Dr. Cecilia ensured that there's a supportive network of individuals who share a common musical experience and can be relied upon for assistance or collaboration.

> **Dr. Cecilia**: It's the nice thing about feeling like you've set up or you're trying to sustain and cultivate a community of practice instead of a class. It's the reason that every Old-Time Ensemble concert concludes with all of the people in the audience who have been in that class coming up and being in community with us and singing and playing with the ensemble so that you see that there is this lineage of people who've taken this part of their musical life and went on to be teachers, performers, whatever they are, but that they started here, and that they always have a home with us because then I know that there are going to be people I can rely on or ask. (First interview)

In addition to fostering participatory elements, the strategic approach of organizing students into small bands applied by Dr. Cecilia was intelligent and effective in Old-Time Ensemble. Given the substantial class size, the decision to divide students into smaller bands had a great advantage especially in coping with memorization issue. This arrangement meant that each student was responsible for memorizing only a manageable set of four or five tunes during the whole semester. As a result, with all small bands collectively mastering a minimum of four tunes each, they were well-prepared to deliver a comprehensive and extended concert performance. This approach optimized the learning process and contributed to the successful implementation of a more extensive repertoire during the end of the semester performance (field notes from observation).

196

Student Experiences

Student Motivations

Students' motivations to join these ensembles varied among student participants. Most students expressed a desire to extend their musical horizons and acquire new knowledge about music as their primary motivation for joining these ensembles. Ruby found that she could diversify her experiences and develop her skills in percussion by learning new types of music through these ensembles. She also expressed her interest in learning about various cultures, and she acknowledged that music and its underlying concepts in these ensembles could serve as a gateway to understanding these cultures.

> **Ruby:** Because I'm a percussionist, each semester I try to take something a little bit different. For me, I'm always interested to learn different cultures, and I think you can do a lot of that based on music and the thinking behind music. Also, all the ensemble attended or connected to where I'm in percussion and that helped me grow as a percussionist too.

Max also was curious about learning subjects that are different from what he knows. As he engaged in some ethnomusicology courses, he found that exploring new musics and gaining a better understating of them was interesting to him, so he wanted to keep learning more about different types of music.

> **Max:** I did a little bit of ethnomusicology, so studying non-Western music was very interesting to me because it's just another example of me gravitating towards things that I'm not familiar with or would like to understand better.

> In addition to learning new music, the "fun" part of these ensembles played a role in motivating some students to join. Maya was influenced by her friends' advice to take the Old-

197

Time Ensemble, and she found that the experience would be a lot of fun. She was also excited by the opportunity to explore music beyond Western classical arts, allowing her to break away from the prevailing repertoire.

> **Maya:** My friends that all took an Old-Time Ensemble before had said really great things about it. They were like, you should really take this class, so I did. I was like, whoa, this is really cool, and I stated it because it was just so much fun, so I did. Then I was like, wow, I could do things that aren't just Western classical music on my instrument, and I'm having so much fun doing it. That really started my improv like jazz, old timing like just journey. I guessed there will be other types of violin playing that I can do that's just not old, dead White people, which is really nice.

Max also acknowledged that the fun part of these ensembles contributed to his decision to take them.

> **Max:** Part of it is what I mentioned before about gravitating towards things that I'd like to understand better. Part of it is just like with Steelpan and Old-Time Ensemble, I just thought it sounded fun.

Some students decided to take some of these ensembles because they have connections to their own cultures and/or past musical experience. Ian highlighted how taking Old-Time Ensemble could connect him with his roots in the State. He saw old-time music as profoundly embedded in his home state and wanted to explore and learn about the music of his own culture. Unlike Western classical music, which he didn't feel connected to, old-time music resonated with his sense of belonging to the State, making it a natural and meaningful choice for him.

> **Ian:** I felt connected to Old-Time Ensemble because being a native in [the State], I saw that Old-Time was super deeply rooted in [the State]. It just felt like something that I

should do is learn more about the music from where I'm from because the rest of my education has been Western and classical music, which is from Europe, not from where I'm from. I don't feel a connection to Europe, but I feel a strong connection to [the State] and old-time music is super deeply rooted here, so it felt right.

Alice had distinct motivations for taking both the Steelpan and Old-Time Ensembles. For Old-Time, she saw it as a chance to bridge the gap between the informal music she loved from her community and the formal music she learned in school. She found it was "therapeutic" for her to witness the music she cherished being treated seriously in an educational setting, especially since she previously felt a divide between these two aspects of her musical life. In contrast, she chose the Steelpan Ensemble to explore something entirely new and unfamiliar, providing her with a fresh and exciting musical experience.

Alice: I was excited to take them, Steelpan and Old-time, for different reasons. I was excited to take Old-Time because I've kind of struggled with… I love the music that I made with my family and in my community that was really informal that I would dance a lot, close a lot to growing up, and here like informal situations. I love the music that I was making in school and formally… I still really struggle with how separate those two lives feel. I thought that taking Old-Time might be very therapeutic for me to see some of the music that I know and grew up enjoying and playing and dancing to being held in a serious regard, if you will, like seeing it in a school was really strange for me. There was a big part of my life when I was in undergrad when I realized that no one was playing like mountain old-time tunes. No one was playing fiddle, and they were all reading music and I played by ear. I remember being really ashamed of that, so seeing Old-Time now in like a positive light was really therapeutic for me. Then Steelpan, I wanted to take it

199

because I didn't know the first thing about it. It was the opposite. It was so new to me,

whereas Old-Time was something that I'm very familiar with.

Thara's past musical experience was mostly based on her engagement with a community street

drum group. Her motivation to join the Steelpan Ensemble stemmed from her positive

experience in that group, as she was looking for a similar experience within the university. Thara

also highlighted how her commitment to learning new things and her desire for continuous

growth drew her to the Steelpan Ensemble, where she embraced the process of struggling,

learning, and enjoying the experience, even if mastery wasn't immediate.

> **Thara:** I had such a positive experience with a community band and was looking for
>
> something similar and read this article about [Dr. Llanzo]. I wrote to him and asked if he
>
> knew if there was a community band of steelpan… Then, I asked him if I could come and
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> just kind of watch the class, and he was very, very open to that. That's how last semester
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> I was there and then just kind of started playing with the group into struggle [hard work],
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> but I just really worked harder in between classes… I like to learn something all the time,
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> and that's what Steelpan has been something to just struggle and learn and not be very
>
> good at, but just enjoy something.

Another critical factor that led Maya and Ian to take the Old-Time Ensemble was that

taking one ensemble from a diverse culture was one of the requirements of the Music Education

degree program. Although they were required to take these types of ensembles once in their

degree program, they kept taking the Old-Time Ensemble several times because they found the

experience helpful and enjoyable.

> **Maya:** I took Old-Time because it fulfilled a requirement, and then I had a good time
>
> doing it, and then I kept doing it.

Ian: For music Ed, I'm not sure how it works for incoming people, but for my year, taking one eclectic ensemble, even though I know the word eclectic is kind of a bad word in some people's mind, taking one eclectic ensemble is required, but after that I took it six times as an elective.

Ian added that taking the Old-Time Ensemble several times was very helpful to him because he was able to learn new materials.

Ian: I learned more every time I took the same class. It was the same class, but I learned something new every semester that I took it. There was a lot of things that were the same every time as new people came in, but I was always able to find something new to learn every semester that I took it.

Ruby also benefited from taking the Indian Ensemble multiple times as each time she was able to learn new rhythms and extend her instrumental techniques.

Ruby: I remember my... the second time I took Indian I learned more stuff. The first semester was building the basic stuff and learning old *taals* [type of Indian rhythms] or basic rhythmic structure. Then, the second semester I built, and I've learned from the first semester.

Some students expressed that they were motivated to join these ensembles because their engagement with these ensembles would help them in their professional life. Ruby emphasized the need for a music performance degree program that mandates exposure to various musical genres and techniques, rather than allowing students to simply focus on a single area of preference such as orchestra. She emphasized that taking these ensembles is necessary to prepare students for real-world opportunities in the job market, where being adaptable and versatile is a key advantage.

Ruby: I think it's important for music performance majors because now everybody is

trying to be well-rounded, and now the world is looking for musicians with more

experience playing different kinds of music too. If you want to find jobs in the real world,

if you want to play gigs, they are always not going to ask you to play only one

instrument, or one kind of music. You have to be well-rounded. I agree that we should

make it a requirement. Unfortunately, now you can just take orchestra and then you're

done with your degree.

Thara shared her experience as an educator when there was oftentimes a disconnect between

administrative decision-making and student involvement as many decisions are made on behalf

of students without their direct input. Therefore, Thara sought a genuine space where students'

perspectives are valued, and she found the Steelpan Ensemble to be that space where she could

truly engage with students and be more connected with them so that she could learn more about

their needs and aspirations, which would help her in her professional job.

Thara: We're in so many meetings and initiatives, and we are really making decisions

for students, but I'm hardly with students. These students are not part of those decision-

making pieces, and I really wanted to be in a space, not just a social space, but a real

space where students are actually… like why the reason for them to be at [the

University]. And so, this was that kind of magical space for me where I could be with

[the University] students and be part of it.

Influences of Student Musical and Cultural Backgrounds

Students' musical and cultural backgrounds played an important role in shaping their

experiences and perspectives within these ensembles. Students provided varied insights into how

their unique backgrounds intersected with the teaching and learning process and influenced their

engagement in culturally diverse musical contexts. The influences of students' musical and cultural backgrounds manifested in various ways, as certain aspects of learning resonated more harmoniously with particular students' backgrounds while posing some challenges for others. Max explained how the teaching and learning process in all of these ensembles aligned well with his music background. He was able to compare the similarities between the institutional approach of gamelan music and Indian classical music and then make a transfer to his learning in the Indian Ensemble. Max also indicates that his previous experience in popular music facilitated his learning engagement across Steelpan and Old-Time Ensemble styles, as all reflect similar concepts in learning (i.e., learning by rote and interaction).

> **Max:** I would say that my background aligns pretty well with at least Steelpan and, well, actually really with all of them. I am used to looking at chords on a page and learning a song that way and listening and everything [learn by rote]. When I was at my previous college, I had a Javanese gamelan ensemble, and that was like, here's the sheet music. It's numbers and that corresponds to the notes that you play. The rhythm is like very regular… It's similar to Indian classical music. It's this thousands-year-old tradition…. I would say that kind of thing translated pretty well to Indian classical, where it was like, this is where it says on the page. Now, like, we're going to do it in this particular way… We just have to remember that we're doing that. But with something like Steelpan or Old-Time, I'm used to being in a band and being like, okay, so these are the chords, and this is the structure of the song. Let's just practice until we get it right. None of that was too weird for me. But again, I come from very much a popular music background.

Alice experienced a strong connection between her musical background and her experiences in Steelpan and Old-Time Ensembles. While Alice recognized that the musical genre and

203

instruments of the Steelpan Ensemble were distinct from her upbringing, she still found common ground in the process of learning by rote and communal engagement, similar to her experiences with family and friends. The sense of "bonding" and "spiritual" connection in the Steelpan that Alice felt created a rewarding and enjoyable experience for her.

> **Alice:** If I consider my background like the town that I grew up in and some of the music that I made with friends and family, then I mean it [the Steelpan] aligns in some ways in that it's oral… Old-Time totally aligns. It's basically what it is so that completely aligns. Then, Steelpan aligns in that it's oral. Obviously not the music, the instruments, the style of music; that's not the same. I think it's like making music orally… I'm very comfortable doing that because I grew up doing informal old-time music orally. I also took Suzuki piano, so that is oral. I like that we've got to say we're vibing or something. We get in a rhythm grooving in Steelpan. It's almost a spiritual experience when we like lock in, and then we just go for a while. It's really bonding, and it's really fun. When we started like locking our parts in and like just grooving, I was like, this feels so good like I want to keep doing it.

Alice indicated that even though the teaching and learning process within the Old-Time Ensemble differed from her previous experiences in formal music education, this approach still resonated with the way she learns and interacts with music in her community.

> **Alice:** If you call school music my background, then it's different… Old-Time is not really teacher-led even though there was an instructor. Even when she was in the room, she did not lead. She would be like who wants to go, someone starts. We'd get into groups, and we would lead, and she would just come around to see if we needed

anything. It's pretty different than what we see in schools, but really similar to what I grew up with in my hometown.

On the other hand, Thara's experience in instructional technology contrasted sharply with her journey in the Steelpan Ensemble. As she is a non-music major and did not have formal music experience, she was not able to make a transfer from her previous learning experience in instructional technology to music learning, especially since she was unfamiliar with the music vocabulary used in the ensemble. However, Thara found the experience rewarding and developed her own methods to overcome difficulties and progress in the ensemble.

Thara: The learning piece [part] was very different. I've never struggled so much to learn in my field which is instructional technology. There's also a lot of hands on. There's a lot of theory. Learning to apply all that, it was never so challenging, and it was fairly simple, and I knew what to do. I knew how I had to study, how long, and how to pass the course; whereas this one was very different for me. The language in the class was very different. I didn't know much of the music language at all. I had to really listen. But I don't know, I mean, I struggled through it, and I loved it… The learning piece [part] on a personal level was very challenging as I said earlier, but I just had my own ways of videotaping a peer and then practicing in between, so I just had my own ways of figuring it out.

Ian and Ruby highlighted how their Western classical music backgrounds helped in some sort in the transfer of skills from their previous training to their ensemble experiences. Ian mentioned how his classical technique assisted his transition to fiddle playing.

Ian: There is a lot of transfer between the two. I feel part of that being the technique of playing viola or violin classically, sometimes it can help you whenever you move over to

fiddle because you have a certain level of comfortability with your instrument that

someone who hasn't had 11 years of classical training might not have to begin with.

There was an advantage in that, but there are other ways.

As a percussionist, Ruby was able to apply her instrumental training to enhance the sound quality

in Steelpan, adapting techniques for mallets and grooves. Her knowledge also guided drum

sounds in the Indian Ensemble although she acknowledged that there might be some different

techniques for different performance styles.

> **Ruby:** The technique sometimes transfers a little bit, and since I'm a percussionist and
>
> I'm still playing percussion instruments in those ensembles, I know from my classical
>
> training how to make something sounding good or sounding better. Like in Steelpan with
>
> mallets, I know how to hold mallets for 17 years. It's just the groove is a little different in
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> Steelpan, but you can still pretend. A classical percussionist could still pretend to be a
>
> Steelpan drummer for a certain level. Then for Indian, I guess I know how those drums
>
> should be sounding because of my classical training. I know if I hit, you hear this way; it
>
> will sound a little better, but the technique you use with your fingers is not usually used
>
> in [Western] classical.

However, Ian highlighted the distinction between classical and old-time music learning.

He noted how classical musicians heavily rely on sheet music and might struggle to learn music

by ear. While on the other hand, that might not be the case with someone who grew up in old-

time music tradition.

> **Ian:** There's not a very big focus on learning by rote in a lot of classical music unless
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> you're like a Suzuki learner. We become super dependent on a score, and then when
>
> we're told to learn this tune. It feels like it has a lot of notes and a lot of very nuanced and

complex bowing patterns. We feel like it's harder for us to pick it up because we're not

used to learning by rote. But someone who started their musical journey in old-time

music, they can sometimes pick those things up quicker. They're more used to learning

that way.

Although Ian wished to have sheet music to expedite his learning process during his beginning

period at the Old-Time Ensemble, his perspective shifted over time. He realized the value of

developing a good ear and the potential limitation of sheet music in impeding the stylistic

essence of old-time music.

> **Ian:** My philosophy changed throughout my time taking the ensemble. At first, I thought
>
> that I would learn a tune much faster if it was written down in front of me, and I could
>
> see the skeleton. But now that I've been in it further, I've found the importance of having
>
> a very good ear and being able to pick up a tune by ear, like that [snapped his finger to
>
> show how fast he could learn a tune by ear]. I also found that reading a score can
>
> sometimes be a hindrance in playing old-time music, like stylistically. It can get in the
>
> way.

Maya also contrasted the structured nature of Western classical music with the immersive

learning required in the Old-Time Ensemble. She acknowledged the challenge of not having

sheet music but also admitted the growth she has experienced different types of learning over

several semesters in the Old-Time Ensemble.

> **Maya:** Western classical music, I was in for like seven years of my entire life, and then
>
> getting to a new experience. It's all in front of you. The sheet music is all in front of you.
>
> It always tells you what to do… But getting into Old-Time, I was deeply uncomfortable
>
> the first couple times I went in person because there was no sheet music, and my little

207

ears had to be trained to listen for how to play things on my instrument. It was so different than what I had learned before… When I started taking the class [Old-Time], I knew that there wasn't sheet music, but I don't think I was mentally prepared for the amount of listening and honestly practice I put into it because you have to learn a tune to teach the class. I had to learn a tune to teach for the class. It was an eye opener. I was like, wow, this is really hard to do, but I've gotten better at it because I've been in it for five semesters now. It was a very big adjustment. I had no idea what I was getting into, but I've still loved to do it.

Ruby, as well, indicated how having sheet music would facilitate her learning process, but then her initial preference for sheet music evolved. She came to recognize the importance of adapting to the cultural styles of learning in order to get a better understanding of that culture.

Ruby: When I first started, I wanted to have a score. That would help me learn it [the music] much faster for sure. But right now, I respect the culture. I think learning the way it should be is also learning about the culture, and I prefer it that way now.

On the other hand, Alice expressed her preference for learning music by ear rather than through sheet music because her musical background was rooted in learning by ear. While she became proficient in reading music, her deep connection to engaging with music through oral tradition remained stronger.

Alice: We never in either never had a chance to use notation…[did you wish to have notation or not?]. No, not me. I grew up first learning by ear, so I absolutely was really uncomfortable reading music when I was in high school, and I was still like hide the fact that I didn't read it well. Then when I got my formal degrees, I got really comfortable

reading music, but there's a huge part of me that just loves making music without reading

it, and I definitely prefer that actually.

The case of Thara was a little bit complex because she does not know how to read music or learn

by ear. As Dr. Llanzo did not use any sort of music notion in the Steelpan Ensemble, Thara

wished to have some sort of charts that indicate the correct pitch that she would play. However,

she relied on imitating and video-recording her peers and listening to rehearsal recordings to

cope with her learning challenges. She recognized how her listening practices made deep

connections with the music that wouldn't have happened if she was simply reading music.

> **Thara:** I can do neither one of those. I can't play by ear, and I can't read the notation.
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> There were times I wished that was just something that has the notes that then I would
>
> follow in the right way, something very concrete. Whereas playing by ear, you just lose it
>
> once you leave the class. But then, I have to say somehow by listening to the music, and
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> it was very helpful to have the recordings from the rehearsal every week, so listening to
>
> it. I know when I went for a walk, I would listen to it. It's just so deep now, like when I
>
> get up at night sometimes, the Engine Room piece was in my head. I think that wouldn't
>
> happen if you were just reading this.

Student Values and Takeaways

Students underscored the valuable opportunities they found in developing and

encouraging diverse skills through their engagement in various experiences in these ensembles.

Students appreciated the process of cultivating their musical, social, and professional skills while

participating in an enjoyable and fun educational journey. They valued the chance to connect and

learn about diverse cultures and explore various music communities, which led them to gain a

better understating of the music and its cultural significance.

209

The ensemble directors' approach of teaching music through rote learning, without relying on sheet music, had a transformative impact on students. This teaching approach encouraged students to actively listen, think, and interact with music in new ways, distinct from their accustomed practices. As a result, many students in these ensembles experienced significant growth in their capacity to learn and perform music by ear and obtain a deeper musical connection. Maya acknowledged how participating in the Old-Time Ensemble was truly enlightening for her because she was able to develop a strong sense of musical discernment, "[i]t was really eye opening, and now I feel like I have a pretty good ear because of it [Old-Time Ensemble], so it developed my ear training a lot." Ian also appreciated how the Old-Time Ensemble significantly enhanced his auditory perception in a way that other oral skills courses at the School of Music couldn't achieve. He indicated that despite the potential benefits of oral skills classes, he found a distinct contrast in how the Old-Time Ensemble honed his ear and enabled him to grasp and learn music from diverse cultural styles by ear more effortlessly.

> **Ian:** As a musician, Old-Time Ensemble developed my ears like nothing else at [the University] could. I've taken all of the oral skills classes, and you could argue that they're helpful, but it's very night and day that the Old-Time Ensemble developed my ears like they couldn't. I have a much better ear after taking Old-Time for seven semesters than I would have if I didn't. As a learner, I'm more competent in learning by ear than I would have been if I didn't take this [Old-Time Ensemble]. I can pick up tunes from other cultures easier. At the conference whenever we went to a jam session and they called a jazz tune, I could learn the jazz tune more effectively than I feel like I would have been able to if I didn't take Old-Time Ensemble. It just made me a more well-rounded musician.

Max described how the learning in Steelpan and Old-Time Ensembles involved imitating melodies, feeling musical components such pitch and rhythms, and then memorizing them. In alignment with Ian, Max expressed appreciation for this approach because it encouraged him to develop his ear in a manner not emphasized in oral skills classes. Thus, his participation in these ensembles significantly improved his ear for pitch, harmony, rhythm, and overall musical sensitivity.

> **Max:** He plays the thing [Steelpan] and tells you the notes that are written on the pan, and then you imitate it until you get it. Then, you just have to memorize it. I really appreciated that because it forced me to train my ear in a way that I wasn't being forced to do even in oral skills where we're taught oral skills here. It pertains to Western classical music, and we use modern examples because music is all connected in that way. It's all in the context of the rhythm syllables and the pitch syllables that we use, as opposed to these highly syncopated rhythms that you're not thinking of in any kind of formal way. You just have to feel it out until you can really feel that rhythm, and the same with the pitch. I would say Old-Time felt very similar where it's just like you're going to do this until you can feel it. If you can't feel it, you'll ask someone for help, and they'll have to help you… I think that's been the biggest thing that I've gotten out of these ensembles. My ear for pitch, harmony, everything, and my feel for rhythm is just so much better as a result.

Alice valued her learning experience in the Steelpan Ensemble and described it as a "comprehensive immersive experience." She noted improvements in her various musical and social skills and also contrasted this immersive approach with the segmented method often used in other music settings where skills are broken down into isolated components, such as in bands.

211

She enjoyed the fun learning experience, especially by engaging and making music with her peers.

> **Alice:** These were less one skill focused. It was really comprehensive. I'm listening better. My coordination is getting better. My memories getting better. My teamwork is getting better. My communication is getting better. My body movements are getting better. I think it's so mixed together. It's a totally immersive comprehensive musical experience. When I taught band, we have those books basics and rhythm. It's just a rhythm that you play, and you get the rhythm. Then, you go do your whole tones, and you get your notes. We really break it down into these pieces. We don't go into Steelpan and like play a note, just do a role for a while. My roles were actually really terrible when we first started Steelpan, and he never worked with me on them. I have just been getting better at them as we continue make music and play. The Calypso rhythms are just soaking in as I'm trying to remember the form and as I'm trying to remember my notes. It's just a comprehensive music experience where I feel like in some of my other school music settings that hasn't really been the case… Every moment was filling every moment with fun; every moment was with others. What I value is just that comprehensive immersive experience.

Ruby acknowledged how each music has its unique way of engagement and perception. Therefore, her experiences in both the Indian and Steelpan Ensembles have influenced how she perceives and interacts with sound in diverse ways. Ruby indicated how her enjoyable experiences helped honing her both musical and social skills and adapting them to Western settings.

Ruby: For me, both India and Steelpan, they listen to sound a little differently. For India, we will have a structure and then can improv out of that. Also on the steel drum, you can produce different sounds through different ways of playing. I think that's really helpful when you transfer that to other percussion instruments. On the same instrument, we'll explore ways of making it sound differently. It helped me improv and also memorizing things faster. For steel band, it helped me groove a lot more than just looking at the score for Western music because steel band is all about having fun and groove together as a group. That helps me go back to Western music playing, helps me groove more, also listen to others more, and try to groove together as a group more.

Some students expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn multiple and new instruments in these ensembles**.** Ian was able to expand his musical skills by practicing and learning different instruments though his journey in Old-Time Ensemble.

Ian: I started Old-Time Ensemble playing the fiddle and then I moved to the guitar on my second semester. On my third semester and since, I've been playing banjo, so I had the ability to practice and learn different instruments.

Max shared his enthusiasm for learning and playing the sarod the steelpan instruments, emphasizing the unique opportunities these ensembles provided. He highlighted the accessibility challenges and rare chance to gain experience learning these instruments elsewhere.

Max: In Indian classical, I did not know what a sarod was before I decided to learn it. Then the professor shows up the first day with his sarod, and I'm like, that's what I want. I need that in my life!... With Indian classical, it was an opportunity to learn an instrument that I had never played before, so I'm learning sarod. It's challenging, but really, really cool! That was another thing with Steelpan too! It's like, when am I ever

going to get to play a Steelpan again. It's an opportunity to immerse myself in something that I would have trouble gaining access to elsewhere, aside from just it's fun… I'd say having the opportunity to play this music and just like having it be so accessible to me… I might be studying jazz guitar. I might be aiming to be a songwriter and a rock musician. But the fact that I can take Steelpan Ensemble in a formal setting, take Indian classical and all these things, I would have really no clue where to start looking for someone to teach me these things if I was really interested. The opportunity to do it alone is really amazing.

Some students appreciated how these ensembles contributed to their development professionally. Ruby highlighted how her involvement in ensembles from various cultures enriched her experience as a musician as well as a music teacher, especially since she gained insights into different cultural contexts.

Ruby: For each of the world music group I've attended, learning from different ways helped me to teach people in different ways, understand the culture, and how the music became now it is today. It helps me as a musician because now I understand it, I can play it better; I can teach it better too.

Ian shared his gratitude for how the Old-Time Ensemble contributed to extending his musical horizon and diversifying his skills, equipping him with competence across various genres of music both as a musician and a music educator. He noted the advantage of competitiveness fostered by engaging in ensembles from various cultures, and he emphasized the wider perspectives and distinct skills they provide. Ian also commended the teaching expertise of Dr. Cecilia, which he believed had highly enhanced his own educational capabilities.

Ian: I value the way that Old-Time diversified me as a musician. I'm no longer a one trick pony, I guess. I've got two forms of music that I feel I'm pretty competent in… If you participate in world ensembles, you have an edge over people who haven't... I think you're a more diverse musician than people who haven't participated in those ensembles. You've been around more… I might be in a unique position because I've taken it seven times. I do feel like I could teach an Old-Time Ensemble, and I have spent some time teaching. I have a couple fiddle students that I've been teaching how to play fiddle in an old-time style. I've bounced around on enough instruments in an Old-Time Ensemble that I think I could take a group of people that have never played old-time music and turn them into a pretty successful old-time ensemble… as an educator, observing [Dr. Cecilia] teaching by rote, she's one of the absolute best at teaching by rote in the State, probably in the country, probably in the world. It's her thing. She's very good at it. Observing her teaching by rote, it's impossible to not leave there as a better educator.

Max expressed his gratefulness about how his involvement in ensembles from diverse cultures elaborated further his creative abilities as a composer and songwriter. This diverse exposure has raised his interest in incorporating musical elements from the music that he learned in these ensembles into his composition work, especially since he started to recognize that there are different ways to think and engage with music. His reflections on the intricacies of Indian classical music highlighted its complexity, challenging preconceptions about musical constraints of Western classical music. He acknowledged that his experiences have not only expanded his artistic horizons and innovative thinking but also fostered his musical understanding and sensibilities, making his musical journey priceless.

Max: Because I'm a composer and songwriter, I think all of these music[s] have influenced me on some level, especially with the Old-Time. I'm trying to write more folky stuff. Thinking about rhythms, especially with Steelpan, I can incorporate more in that kind of thing [composition]. I do plan to continue taking it Indian Classical Ensemble for the rest of my time here so who knows what that'll do to my brain… I've always found it fascinating because it's one of those things that's really familiar in a lot of ways, but also so different in that I don't understand the form. It's really ancient and refined form of music. It's funny in this School we often talk about how constraining Western classical music can be. But then I get into Indian Classical Ensemble, and I'm like, oh, there are rules to this. You have to approach notes in a specific way. In the various *raags* [Indian modes]*,* there are notes that you're allowed to sit on more than other notes. It's really interesting!… I said before, the way it's contributed to my development as a musician in terms of my ear training, my feel for rhythm, and exposing me to new ideas, I think it has been just really invaluable!

Thara appreciated the teaching and learning process that she experienced in the Steelpan Ensemble, highlighting how this experience elevated her perspective on pedagogy and teaching methods as an educator outside the music domains. Thara underscored the value of experiential and peer collaboration learning where students learn by actively engaging in activities, trying and making mistakes and learning from them, and then figuring the way of playing through practical experience. She also noted how it was important exploring the cultural context of the Steelpan that fostered a richer understanding of the genre. Thara's involvement in the Steelpan Ensemble has pushed the boundaries of her self-perceived capabilities. She noted that the most gratifying element of education is its capacity to transport students to unanticipated horizons. This

experience of transformative learning has the potential to enhance self-assurance and unveil fresh avenues for individual development.

> **Thara:** As an educator, for me this was an example of the best kind of pedagogy. You learn by doing. You learn by doing it with your peers. You make mistakes, and you figure it out. You learn some of the theory and the origins and the culture. When something is embedded in its culture, you get a richer understanding of it… I really value that. I really value the experience with other students. I'll probably keep taking classes, but it'll not be in music likely because I just can't do the other music courses, and it's going to be very different… It will change the way that I approach teaching and learning non-music because that's not my field. It was a very rich experience, something I really enjoyed, and in the end, it was like, wow, I didn't think I could do this. The best part about learning is a learning experience that takes you to a place where you look back and go, I never thought I could do this…

Therefore, Thara was intrigued by the constructivist and collaborative approach in the Steelpan Ensemble, contrasting it with passive learning that she noticed in common, general classroom settings. She critically questioned why every learning experience can't be as enriching as Steelpan Ensemble, which requires us as educators to carefully reflect on our current practice to help engaging students more in the learning process and foster their growth. Hence, Thara expressed that the spirit of interactive and collaborative learning in the Steelpan Ensemble would promote her approach to teaching and learning in her own field, even though it's not related to music.

> **Thara:** I was really fascinated with the teaching process. Music is not my field, and in other classes that I visit or sit in, I'm just struck with how it is such a lonely experience

217

for students. They sit down, and they may take some notes. They're kind of visibly bored or disengaged. That is something we talk about, a lot of disengagement. But then over here, it's a very constructivist and collaborative process. You play the right note at the right time. The way it was taught, I was really fascinated how engaged everybody was, and how the instructor would kind of go around teaching the different parts to the different groups playing different instruments. Then, we would kind of put it together and practice and put it together…. I would always think why can't all learning be like this? So as an outsider, not from music, I am as someone in higher ed, I was definitely fascinated with that.

Some students further illustrated their contrasting experiences with rehearsal and performance stress in Old-Time and Steelpan Ensembles, specifically comparing them to Western classical music settings. Students valued the flexible and relaxed feelings they experienced while participating in these ensembles. Ian reflected on his Western classical training that concentrated on perfectionism which might lead to excessive stress, fear of failure, and low self-esteem. While on the other hand, Ian found value in simply participating and contributing to the music in the Old-Time Ensemble.

> **Ian:** I felt in my Western classical training that everything I was doing there was a lot of emphasis on learning to read from a score. There was a lot of emphasis on technique, which was probably the most important thing that people were teaching me for a really long time, playing exactly what's on the page and trying to make that into music. But in Old-Time Ensemble, the focus was on participating. On my very first semester, I wasn't able to play the music very much good. I sounded nothing like [Dr. Cecilia] whenever she was playing, but I was playing something. That was equally as important as anything

218

else. Just being there and trying is just as important to old-time music as playing everything correctly as to classical music.

Maya also highlighted the more flexible nature of old-time music compared to Western classical music. She illustrated how Western classical musicians often follow rigid standards of correctness adhering to music scores, while Old-Time music embraces individual creative expression. Thus, Maya valued the freedom to add her personal touch and play creatively within the Old-Time Ensemble.

> **Maya:** In classical music like Western, it's very like right or wrong, and old-time music I think is less right or wrong. There're stylistic things of course, but old-time is like if you're playing a note and you think it sounds cool, then yeah, do it. But if you're sitting in a symphony orchestra and you're playing like Beethoven and you play the note that you think sounds cool, the conductor like, "don't ever do that again," so it is extremely different.

Alice felt the same in the Steelpan Ensemble where rehearsals reflected a more flexible nature that allow for individual expressions compared to the formal atmosphere of an orchestra.

> **Alice:** It [Steelpan] is a little more informal like there are times we can give opinions. It's a little more relaxed feeling. Then, an orchestra would be like, "don't talk," that kind of thing. It's more relaxed.

Maya added that the Old-Time setting breaks down hierarchical barriers present in Western orchestras that foster "exclusion." She appreciated the participatory aspect of the Old-Time Ensemble where everyone was welcomed to participate regardless of their musical skill levels which created a more open, inclusive milieu.

Maya: [Old-Time] It's very participatory, which I love. Because in symphonies and orchestras, if you can't play it, you're not in. If you can't play it, you're out. If you can't play it, you're in the back of the section. It's very much like a hierarchy of who can play the best and who can sit in the front to play the best. But in Old-Time Ensemble, everybody's just in a big circle, and it doesn't matter your skill level. It doesn't matter if you can play an instrument. You're just there, stomping your foot at very least, then you're playing music and having a good time doing it.

Ian elaborated more on how the concept of perfectionism can shape music performance in certain directions in terms of challenges to achieving technical perfection on the instrument in order to meet audiences' expectations of Western classical performance. In contrast, Ian saw the value in Old-Time performances that were more relaxed for students and interactive with the audience, which created a more communal and lively ambiance. Thus, he pointed out how the emphasis of the class was on creating a more enjoyable and fun teaching and learning process rather than achieving a formal performance.

Ian: It's a completely different experience to perform in an old-time setting than it is to perform in a classical setting. For one, it's a much looser feeling. Whenever I play classical music, even when I have it down really good, I feel a pressure to make the best performance that I can to play the most correct notes with the most beautiful tone and everything like that. The audience, like looking at the audience, it's like looking at a room of critics. They might not feel that way. But looking at them like everyone sitting there, they're paying close attention to just you and your sound. But when you're performing in an old-time setting, you're just doing the same thing that you've done every Tuesday for the entire semester. Both people are watching, and a lot of the times,

they might sing the song with you if there're words, and they've heard it before. They

might dance a little bit. It's very common for people in the audience to clap along or sing

along or dance in their seat at an old-time performance. It's a completely different vibe

than performing in a classical setting…The main goal of old-time music is not to

perform. The main goal of old-time music is to participate or to dance. Although we do

perform at the end of the semester in the Old-Time Ensemble, the journey is the

important part, not the performance at the end. The end is just for fun. In reality, the act

of learning it throughout the entire semester is the real goal of just playing together.

Students expressed their high appreciation for the role of the ensemble directors in

connecting them to the rich historical and cultural contexts of the music that they learned. The

majority of students recognized that their exposure to historical and cultural contexts in these

ensembles exceeded their initial expectations or awareness. The incorporation of history and

culture into the musical practice not only enriched students' comprehension of the music but also

prompted a reevaluation of their initial preconceptions and stereotypes surrounding both the

music itself and its culture. Alice and Max valued how Dr. Llanzo provided a comprehensive

understanding of the steelpan instrument, not only in terms of its performance aspects but its

historical origins and cultural contexts.

Alice: I also learned more about the history of the pans than I thought I would, and I've

enjoyed that a whole lot. He's done a good job of teaching us about history and where

they [the pans/ instruments] come from.

Max: One thing that I really appreciated was the way [Dr. Llanzo] gave us a crash course

like the history of the instrument and the cultural significance of it. The way that the

instrument itself is this product of imperialism. In Trinidad, drumming was banned by the

French colonial government, so they had to come up with new and inventive ways of playing. With World War II, there was a US Navy base in Trinidad, and they repurposed old oil drums that had been discarded and tuned them in really sort of DIY ingenious kind of way to create this melodic pitched instrument. I think that aspect of steelpan really elevated my appreciation from what I was participating in.

Thara also shared similar gratitude as Alice and Max and reflected on the significance of connecting cultural and musical aspects. She contrasted her experience with the community drum group where history was not explored as deeply as in the Steelpan Ensemble. Thara also pointed out a critical point of how the selected repertoire could play an effective role in connecting students with culture, especially since most of the students were considered beginners in the steelpan instrument. Aligning with Thara's observations, I see how etudes and music exercises will not teach culture; they will teach instrumental techniques.

> **Thara:** I was really hoping in [the community street drum group] we look at history. It's an Afro Brazilian music, but I never really learned about the history of it. Whereas this one [Steelpan], we really learned the language of it. The history is so interesting, and just the cultural piece, and even learning this, Feeling Nice, is one of the most popular pieces they felt so good to not be kind of in this beginner piece when you learn piano and you have to start at the beginner piece. Whereas here we were learning one of the best pieces, and I was blown away by that… Even though we spent the majority of the time playing, the cultural part was every bit connected… It was just seamless the whole cultural and the musical piece.

Max also noted a similar emphasis on the historical and cultural aspects of the Indian Ensemble. He acknowledged how Mr. Rohan helped his students to develop a sense of "reverence" and

respect for the music, as well as enriching their deeper understanding of the music and its traditions.

> **Max:** But just like Steelpan, in Indian classical, he's made sure to sort of educate us about some of the history of his music, where it comes from, and how old it really is. I think he's done a good job of communicating the sort of reverence that he has for the music which in turn allows us, students, to have this reverence for this music. There's a lot more like historical stuff with all of his classes than I was really expecting, but it's all been very, very good!

Maya expressed how her perception of old-time music has changed and evolved through learning about its history. She acknowledged that she initially had limited knowledge of the genre and its cultural roots, but Dr. Cecilia helped her in improving her awareness and understanding of the history and culture of old-time music.

> **Maya:** I knew that there was a rich history in old-time, but I didn't know how rich it was. I didn't know much about the history at all. I thought it was just like country people playing country music and stuff. But then when I got in the class, she started talking about all of the histories and how it's very rooted in stuff that I didn't know… I didn't know the banjo is an African instrument and it just slowly became what it is today. I think it's so interesting.

Ruby appreciated how studying music can provide insights into different cultures, allowing her to appreciate diversity through the lens of music. She acknowledged that engaging in musical performances from diverse cultural backgrounds has been an enlightening experience for her.

Ruby: I think both learning about the culture the music are pretty important. Being able to learn different cultures through music, I really appreciate performing with group of people by performing something I did not learn about in the past.

Furthermore, Ian and Maya found value in engaging and connecting with the old-time music community outside the School of Music. They highlighted their experiences and perspectives on the community and personal growth they've gained from participating in the Old-Time Ensemble. Ian emphasized how his enrolment in the Old-Time Ensemble improved his sense of old-time community and paved the way for him to explore and engage with that community outside the School. He also appreciated how the city he lives in fosters and promotes a vibrant old-time music community beyond the University setting, which was encouraging as well. Hence, he became more interested and involved in varied old-time music activities than those of classical music. Ian's involvement in an inclusive and welcoming old-time music community both within and beyond the School of Music elevated his initial sense of belonging to the old-time community and made it stronger.

Ian: I would say that I value the community that the Old-Time was built, that I've been invited to, that I'm a part of now. That's probably the thing I value the most… [This City] specifically has a super-rich old-time community outside of [the University]… There're ample opportunities to participate in old-time music in just [the City], and I'm sure the other cities have it just as much… I spend a lot of time going to old-time jams. In the summer I plan on going to fiddle festivals. I jam with my friends all the time. I would argue that I would probably spend more time doing things related to old-time music now than I do things related to classical music. Yes, I had never participated in any of this stuff before. I got to [the University] and started and took this class. So everything, I kind

224

of fell down the rabbit hole a bit, and I spend a lot of time doing Old-Time Ensemble

related things, even when School is out of session…Yeah, the class definitely got me out

there.

Ian acknowledged the critical role of Dr. Cecilia in facilitating students' engagement and

interaction with the old-time community outside the classroom. He found that the presence of Dr.

Cecilia, along with classmates, friends, and the connections fostered with fellow old-time

musicians, collectively contributed to his increased comfort and motivation to participate in

various old-time music jam sessions.

> **Ian:** [Dr. Cecilia], she's a part of all of these things as well. She participates in them as
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> well. She's not necessarily the leader in all of them. But the act of her just going to those
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> and being a familiar face makes it super easy for you. It might feel scary to go to [another
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> city] to the [a place in another city] if you're not going to know a single person there, but
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> you can normally count on her being there, or now there's a lot of us that go to [the
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> University] that also go to those jams. You're always going to have a friend there. After
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> you've met the people in the [Region] Old-Time Society, then they become your friends
>
> as well, and it's much easier to go to.

Much like Ian, Maya found value in developing connections within the old-time music

community and expanding her social circle by getting to know new individuals. She, as well,

acknowledged the pivotal role played by Dr. Cecilia in enriching and broadening her teaching

abilities, especially by stimulating her to engage with old-time music activities beyond the

University. May's friends also played a part in motivating her to attend jam sessions, alleviating

the same concerns shared by Ian about attending such events alone.

225

Maya: I think for me the main thing was community. I found a lot of cool people…I know now a lot of the old-time people or old-time society people not like well, but I know of them which is really cool because I never would have before… I play a lot of old-time music outside of School. In my student-teaching with [Dr. Cecilia], we have fiddle club every Wednesday morning. We teach the students how to do some fiddling, which is really fun, and they love it… I go to the occasional jam sometimes… I do try and go to as many as I can because they are so much fun… I used to be very anxious going to them as well, but everybody there so nice, and it's very welcoming. I always go with a couple friends that I know, so I have my little circle and then we can just leave…My friends and I just jam sometimes, like on the way back from a teachers' conference, we stopped in [a restaurant] for dinner and just sat in a park and jammed… I'm constantly thinking of Old-Time because I just love it, and I'm really glad that I got the opportunity to take something like that because it's just opened up in a whole new world of my playing and my musical awareness for sure.

Maya's engagement with the old-time music community expanded his musical horizons and made her interact and feel the stylistic aspects of old-time music more effectively. Maya highlighted the emotional aspect of playing old-time music, and she contrasted the stress associated with classical music with the more "felt" and emotional nature of old-time music. She describes the powerful experience of being part of a jam session, where musicians become attuned to each other and the music, creating an ambiance of unity and enjoyable atmosphere.

Maya: I think it's really nice to get a different perspective on music and having a different type of music to play that's not like that you can play it when you're feeling stressed out about the classical music because it is stressful… Going to jams really helped

with my understanding of how the music is played. It's played but it's also more felt. You

have to feel it and the best feeling is going to a jam and you're starting and then you just

have this moment where you're with everybody in the room. You realize it, and you're in

the middle of the tune, and you're just jamming. It's the best feeling ever because you're

all like locked and locked in together and playing the same thing and just having a great

time doing it!

Thara also recognized in the Steelpan the power of music as a unifying force, capable of creating

meaningful connections and fostering a sense of "camaraderie" among individuals who come

together to collaboratively create and perform music. She highlighted that the act of collectively

tackling challenging musical parts and repeatedly practicing them elevated a strong sense of

unity among the ensemble members.

Thara: In other spaces, you made bonds because you are talking about things that matter

to you, things outside the learning experience. I feel here it's the music itself that brought

us together, that helped create some bonds and sort of a camaraderie like going through

the challenging pieces, playing it over and over again, and then feeling really good when

we were tight. It was fun, and it was still hard work. It was such a nice balance to me.

Absolutely! Music was what brought us together! However, I was fascinated by how, despite the

unifying power of music, there were instances in this study where music failed to connect people

from different music traditions. Therefore, the reflection on students' experiences could open up

opportunities for greater understanding and bridge-building among people through music in the

future.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

The current study's primary focus was on highlighting the experiences of music ensembles representing various cultures within the School of Music. While the integration of these ensembles has brought about numerous advantages and positive changes within the School, it is essential to acknowledge that these steps alone have not been sufficient to make fundamental changes in certain aspects of administrative policies, the level of support, and the music curriculum, and people's awareness associated with these ensembles. Addressing these aspects necessitates concerted efforts because they still reflect tokenism, the superiority of Western music, marginalization, and inequitable treatment, corresponding to concerns raised by many scholars in the literature review. Therefore, this research aimed to bring awareness of these issues to all stakeholders and encourage collective reflection on the research findings as a crucial initial step toward effecting meaningful changes that align more closely with the School of Music's values and mission.

The establishment of these musical ensembles arose from fortuitous circumstances and the presence of instructors with substantial expertise in the music traditions. However, relying solely on serendipity and instructor availability without a well-structured long-term strategic plan and strong foundational factors can significantly interfere with the growth and sustainability of these ensembles. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of formulating a collaborative, comprehensive, and long-term strategic plan and laying strong foundations when establishing such initiatives. The solution should not rely only on the vision or efforts of one individual; rather, it should be a collaborative endeavor involving all stakeholders. It saddens me to observe how Dr. John appeared to be shouldering the burden of establishing, supporting, and

228

maintaining these ensembles for all these years, with only a handful of supporting voices. Additionally, these strategic plans should be comprehensive and long-term. They should not only equip the ensembles with a clear sense of purpose and direction but also play a pivotal role in shaping effective hiring procedures and ensuring a secure term of instructors within the institution, all while promoting equitable accessibility and fair compensation. The hiring protocols need to shift and not adhere to the current norms where teachers of music from diverse cultural backgrounds, distinct from Western styles, are often hired for short-term, part-time positions, or are teaching assistants or graduate assistants in the music program. In essence, a collaborative, considerate, long-term strategy should serve as the guiding compass, steering the course of these ensembles toward continuing success.

Additionally, the findings illustrated some challenges occurring from disparities in support among these ensembles, both among themselves and among other settings within the school. These disparities raised concerns about the potential marginalization of certain ensembles, the need for effective inclusivity, and the necessity of ensuring equity for everyone. Therefore, establishing an official overseeing body for these ensembles within the School could support meaningful changes. Such an official body can serve as an effective channel for efficient communication and the development of clear guidelines. This not only may assist ensemble directors in avoiding ambiguity when addressing critical issues but also could empower them to articulate their needs and concerns rapidly and easily because it would function as a link between the ensembles, the school administration, and other stakeholders, fostering transparent and efficient transmission. The additional primary responsibility of this body would be to manage disparities in support, thereby ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities to promote inclusivity and avoid the risk of any ensemble facing marginalization. Thus, this body

could monitor the progress of each ensemble and oversee a wide variety of essential factors such as teacher and student recruitments, concerns, or conflicts; rehearsal space distribution and scheduling; learning materials, equipment, and instruments availability and maintenance; performance planning; budget issues; and public relations and promotional endeavors. However, the School administration should give careful consideration to ensuring that this official body functions, collaboratively, transparently, and inclusively in its decision-making practices that meet all the needs of all ensembles at the School equitably.

While the findings have indicated encouraging steps taken in the ongoing process of reforming the music curricula at the School, there were some wishes from the participants to further consider the position of and number of credit hours for these ensembles within the curricula, which simultaneously would enhance their effectiveness, visibility, and perceived importance. Ian, Maya, and Ruby's experiences indicated that taking the same ensemble or different ensembles for multiple semesters, even as an elective, has improved their teaching and learning experiences. Their extended duration of learning has equipped them with confidence and competence in teaching the music and skills they learned within their ensemble experiences. Hence, increasing the mandatory number of credit hours allocated to these ensembles within the music degree programs could help students enhance their proficiency in teaching these music traditions. This action would also enhance the visibility and perceived importance of these ensembles and potentially encourage more students to commit during instruction, as these ensembles would become an integral part of their degree programs. However, this adjustment would demand careful consideration of what other aspects of the curricula might need modification to accommodate these ensembles without excluding, marginalizing, or negatively impacting other courses in the music program.

Additionally, it is worth contemplating Ian's wish for a specialized concentration in Old-time music, which could serve as inspiration for the development of new music degree concentrations in Indian, Old-Time, or Steelpan music at the School. Another approach could be through establishing post-baccalaureate certificates in these traditions. These ideas might be more inclusive and ensure that no one is left out or disadvantaged in favor of others. Nonetheless, these suggestions again require long-term planning and a careful analysis of what additional courses, besides the ensembles, could be offered within the degree program of each music tradition. Such a program might contain courses in music theory, history, vocal music, music analysis, and music appreciation of a particular musical tradition. Introducing the integration of these new concentrations or certificates might encourage students from these and other cultures to enroll in the School, thereby fostering the diversity of the School's demographics. Considering how a single ensemble could attract people from its cultural community into the School, we can imagine how multiple courses or a degree program could achieve even better results. Itis important to note that one teacher may not be able to cover all of these courses within a single semester, and it potentially requires hiring additional teachers. Even though this scenario might be ideal, it demands a willingness to take risks and a critical evaluation of financial coverage, resource availability, and support systems, in alignment with Dr. John's expressed concerns.

Before contemplating these suggestions or initiating any reform plan, however, it is essential to involve ensemble directors in the decision-making process because their opinions and visions must be valued. As demonstrated by the findings of this study, ensemble directors hold varying viewpoints on whether their courses should be mandatory, elective, or should require additional or fewer hours. These varying perspectives are influenced by concerns

associated with ensemble growth and perceived importance, institutionalization, and other job-related obligations. To hear how Mr. Rohan received a letter from the University telling him that one of his sections was cut without involving him in the decision-making process was disheartening. Directors must be included as essential participants in decision-making to ensure diverse perspectives and cultural representation in that process, thereby reducing the occurrence of situations where decisions affecting minoritized groups are made by White individuals from the dominant culture (Robinson, 2019).

The findings also suggested that, despite efforts made by the School of Music director and several music faculty members to draw attention to these ensembles and boost positive changes, there still exist varying perspectives and a lack of a cohesive approach among some other School members when it comes to supporting and promoting these ensembles. Reflecting on this issue, I started to understand why my professors are culturally responsive to me and my culture while some of the School's policies did not seem to work effectively for cultural diversity and responsiveness. I also considered that this might be due to the lack of awareness among all members of the School of Music community, especially when reflecting on the concept of the "luxury of ignorance" highlighted by Bradley (2015) and Marx (2006).

Hence, some members of the School may assume that these ensembles representing diverse cultures are already adequately represented in School, and therefore, they do not need to learn about or understand the unique advantages, challenges, or needs of these ensembles. This perspective might result from their lack of awareness about the historical and cultural biases and assumptions that are still associated with music school curricula in the US, which lead to the marginalization, tokenization, and misrepresentation of these types of ensembles within educational settings. Additionally, as shared by some ensemble directors, some faculty members

232

at the School might perceive these diverse ensembles as a threat to their established methods of music teaching and learning. However, the directors emphasize that their intent is not to threaten or diminish anyone but to enrich the overall teaching and learning experience at the School. In addition, some faculty members might be aware of these issues but hesitate to discuss issues of social justice within the School, deeming them too political and unrelated to their musical practice, similar to perspectives highlighted in the literature review. Accordingly, due to these kinds of awareness gaps, assumptions, and hesitations, some individuals may believe that there is no need for active involvement with these ensembles, nor for supporting, and advocating for their integration within the School. This is an assumed inference, however, and cannot be taken as a complete or accurate judgment of the situation. It is essential to include perspectives from other parties to better understand their opinions about these ensembles. This could be one of the limitations of the current study. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to investigate the opinions of Western classical music teachers and students who do not have any interactions with these ensembles and learn further about their views on the integration of these ensembles within the School of Music. They could express various opinions on this integration, as their educational values and cultural biases may shape their awareness of the ensembles' nature and goals, levels of skepticism or resistance tied to unfamiliar music, adherence to Western classical norms, and potential misconceptions or stereotypical views of other instructional approaches. Despite this limitation, one of the main purposes of the current study was to highlight the experiences of these ensembles, to capture people's attention, and to enhance awareness about ensembles' conditions so that all can engage in open dialogue to foster the overall experiences for everyone at the School.

The challenge of terminology in categorizing and describing these ensembles was also recognized as problematic by some participants due to their potential associations with Othering, creating artificial distinctions, and fostering misrepresentation. The use of more neutral and natural terms is encouraged to avoid dismissive labels. Discouraging the use of "non" labels (i.e., "non-Western"), promoting individualized categorization based on uniqueness and cultural significance, and advocating for inclusive language are crucial steps as well. Eliminating hierarchies and false divisions, emphasizing cultural significance, and using generic terms in program listings can contribute to a more fluid and respectful approach, which could play a role in how students perceive the value and importance of these ensembles. An educational focus on the richness of various musical traditions, ongoing dialogue within the School community, and a commitment to highlighting cultural representations may ensure a more inclusive and culturally sensitive ensemble classification. Collectively, these measures could work towards acknowledging and appreciating the diversity inherent in musical traditions within the School.

Findings also illustrated that, although gaps existed in terms of policies, the level of support, the music curriculum, and some faculty members' involvement (all of which somehow had a negative impact on the integration of these ensembles), there is indeed a positive, active, and encouraging transformation in the teaching and learning milieu taking place within the classrooms of these ensembles. Data triangulation involving the reasons for bringing these ensembles to the School of Music, the educational objectives of the ensemble directors and their strategies for addressing challenges, and students' experiences demonstrated strong and shared connections and perspectives. The practices of ensemble directors and students' involvement within the School of Music classrooms actively challenge the dominance of the Eurocentric

paradigm in most music schools across the US in comparison to some aspects illustrated in the literature review.

The instructional objectives of the ensemble directors were shaped by the cultural origins of the music traditions they teach, emphasizing inclusivity, individual growth, and community building. They challenged some perspectives of Western European classical music practices and prioritized active participation and connection with others through music. They placed great emphasis on the importance of learning through oral tradition rather than relying solely on written notation. Thus, they strived to connect students with genuine approaches to music teaching and learning, which students might not be accustomed to, by engaging them in various musical activities such as oral/aural learning, improvisation, arrangement, and understanding of musical elements and structure. Furthermore, the directors highlighted the significance of creating a welcoming, safe, and inclusive space for all students, regardless of their musical backgrounds and identities. This was achieved through open enrollment, accommodation of students' needs and abilities, equitable valuing of each student's contributions and the absence of audition requirements. The directors also aimed to encourage students to actively participate in and engage with the broader musical communities of these traditions, whether within the School of Music or beyond, such as having members of the music community in the ensemble, learning about the music community through audio/visual materials, having community members among the audience, or performing at community events. The overall objectives of the ensemble directors extended beyond mere musical performance, and aspired to foster a holistic understanding of and encourage new ways of thinking about music and its people by illuminating its musical, theoretical, historical, social, and cultural dimensions. Therefore, I can infer from

this observation how the teaching and learning milieu within these ensembles actively serves and is highly connected to their intended purpose at the School of Music.

The findings also indicated how ensemble directors embraced culturally responsive teaching perspectives and aspired to boost their students' ambitions. Culturally responsive teaching is more than a checklist or a specific approach to music instruction; it is a teacher's disposition and mindset to affirm diverse cultural characteristics, perspectives, and experiences of their students, forming bridges to new learning and ideas (McKoy & Lind, 2023). Ensemble directors used various strategies in their teaching to align with the motivations and needs of diverse student abilities and backgrounds. The current study revealed that students joined ensembles for various reasons, including extending their musical horizons and exploring diverse cultures, having fun, connecting with their own culture or previous musical experiences, and developing their professional skills. Students' backgrounds and musical knowledge influenced their experiences in the ensembles, with some students finding similarities and connections to their own background, while other students encountered challenges adapting to new styles of music teaching and learning. However, ensemble directors prioritized getting to know their students and understanding their needs and musical skill levels as a first step toward developing strategic instruction, varied learning methods, and class requirements that could work for each student. The directors also recognized the influence of social interaction on learning and applied mentorship and grouping teaching and learning perspectives with their students. To further assist individual students in honing their musical skills, the ensemble directors offered personalized and individualized support and activities.

Although evaluation techniques differed among the ensembles, the directors commonly did not rely on a single, unified, and standardized assessment method for everyone. Instead, they

236

developed their evaluation techniques based on students' skill levels and abilities, with a focus on meaningful, holistic learning experiences and personal growth. Additionally, to familiarize students with the music and its cultural dimensions, they supplied students with a wide variety of learning materials and resources to create an immersive learning experience that could connect students more with the culture. While the necessity and use of formal performances were debated, the directors similarly placed higher regard on cultural sensitivity and student abilities to consider alternative approaches for public performances. These approaches were determined to be more suitable for students' progress during the semester and within the context of the music tradition. Thus, students were not obligated to exceed their capabilities during the public performance and develop stress; rather, the directors encouraged a relaxed atmosphere and fostered a sense of community. This sort of mindset and teacher disposition are essential to creating culturally responsive instruction that encourages the growth of all students despite their being from various backgrounds in one classroom, which was also emphasized by some participants of the current study.

In addition to the culturally responsive teaching perspectives held by directors, the teaching and learning processes within these ensembles also embodied a social constructivist approach to music education. Wiggins (2016) explained the dynamic nature of human learning and described it as an active, personal endeavor involving the construction of meaning from experiences. This process of constructing knowledge is inherently social, with individuals' learning and understanding shaped by the interactions and engagement with others and their ideas. Hence, in the context of social constructivist music teaching processes, instructors are mindful of and responsive to the factors of human learning processes, and they purposefully structure music learning strategies, activities, and milieus to be conducive to and supportive of

the actual means through which individuals learn within social contexts (Wiggins, 2016). This perspective actually is common also within the informal music learning process (see Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2016), which was adopted by the ensemble directors. As directors encouraged students to collaborate in small groups and promoted peer teaching strategies during instruction, I observed in the three ensembles that students consistently had opportunities and a degree of autonomy during rehearsals to interact and ask questions of each other regarding playing techniques or music form and structure. This allowed them to establish familiarity and connections with the music, with the director often observing these interactions from a distance. This hands-off approach enabled students to actively engage in the learning process, constructing knowledge and understanding through their direct interaction with peers. In certain instances, directors guided or facilitated these interactions by giving specific advice or suggestions (field notes from observation).

Additionally, ensemble directors embraced a social constructivist approach by fostering dynamic, holistic, and collaborative learning milieus within their students, emphasizing the importance of the learning process and journey over the end "product." Directors created opportunities for students to actively contribute to the learning process by valuing, honoring, and incorporating their unique cultural perspectives. Directors not only facilitated interactions between themselves and their students but also fostered a sense of community among ensemble members. This inclusive approach reflected that each individual's cultural background enriched the collective learning experience and contributed to holistic and meaningful musical instruction. Wiggins (2016) explained these sorts of practices and indicated that teaching from a social constructivist perspective is more focused on the dynamic ways in which both teachers and learners engage in the learning process. This approach acknowledges that learning is not

confined to intentional teaching moments but is deeply embedded in real-life, holistic experiences within social contexts. In such settings, individuals naturally learn from one another by asking questions, observing the actions and choices of their peers, and seamlessly fitting themselves into the process by figuring out how they can most effectively contribute to the collective endeavor so that learners participate in shared, holistic experiences with others and figure out what information is essential for them to grasp. When designing such learning experiences, effective teachers emphasize the importance of social interaction not only between learners and teachers but also among learners. This fosters a collaborative learning environment where each individual's life experiences contribute to their own and their peers' learning. Hence, embracing a social constructivist vision involves honoring and respecting learners' natural learning processes throughout instructional planning and implementation (Wiggins, 2016).

Acknowledging and valuing learner perspectives and voices through the social constructivist approach involves navigating the inherent power dynamics in teacher-student relationships within the learning environment. In any learner-teacher relationship, an inherent power dynamic exists, influenced by the teacher's role as a more knowledgeable figure and the institutionalization of educational systems in society (Wiggins, 2016). However, effective learning requires learners to have autonomy, control, and a sense of personal agency and ownership in their learning. Hence, a constructivist teaching approach entails teachers to view themselves as facilitators and collaborators alongside students whose ideas and inputs are not only valuable but integral to the learning process. To effectively embrace this approach, teachers should cultivate ways of teaching and working collaboratively with students to empower them and make them independent in both thought and action. This transformative approach involves teachers stepping back, fostering student self-reliance, and maintaining an attitude that

emphasizes and validates student ideas as central to the overall learning and teaching processes (Wiggins, 2016).

The findings indicated that, in many instances, ensemble directors sought to create a more inclusive and empowering learning milieu by encouraging students to express their ideas, preferences, and creativity in the music-making process. Ensemble directors cultivated a sense of autonomy and ownership among students in various ways such as involving them in decisions about the repertoire, music arrangements, leadership, or even class structure. This collaborative approach transformed directors into facilitators and collaborators, working alongside students rather than just instructing them. Directors also encouraged open communication and discussions and validated students' ideas which was essential to the ensemble's success and fostered a learning environment where every student felt valued. This shift from an authoritative teacher's role, prevalent in formal music learning (i.e., teacher-centered) to a facilitator, collaborative, and empowering one occurs within informal music learning (i.e., student-centered) aligns with the principles of social constructivism and can enhance the overall musical experience for all ensemble members.

The idea of adopting a constructivist and student-centered approach seemed to be intended by the directors of the Old-Time and Steelpan ensembles, as this is one of the common ways to learn these music traditions in their communities. On the other hand, teaching origins in Indian classical music heavily reflect a teacher-centered approach, with the *guru* being the most authoritative figure in the teaching and learning process, where students are bound by strong discipline in following the *guru* (see Schippers, 2007). Although Mr. Rohan cultivated this *guru-*student relationship among his students, there were instances of slight shifts in this dynamic through peer teaching or when students engaged in discussions about arrangements or who

would play certain parts, especially in cases with two or more students playing the same instrument (e.g., two tabla or two sitar/sarod players). This shift indicates how the director might need to make some adjustments to their teaching when bringing certain traditions to academia, especially when facing uncommon circumstances within the tradition, such as having two tabla players or players of different abilities who all need to perform together in public. Another uncommon circumstance within the Indian Ensemble was that I played the oud during my observation. I started my learning through a comparison between the oud and the sarod. Mr. Rohan held the oud and started to identify common aspects between the oud and the sarod. We alternately played these two instruments, allowing me to transfer picking (i.e., right hand) and pitch articulation (left hand) techniques from the sarod to the oud. This process enabled me to learn a new way of playing the oud. In other words, I was able to transfer and construct new knowledge based on my previous knowledge, which is one of the characteristics of the constructivist approach and might not be intended or common in Indian music teaching.

Although there were common teaching perspectives and strategies among the ensemble directors, variations existed in the ways of approaching and thinking about music. Each music tradition evokes its unique way of teaching and learning, with its own framework and cultural context that demands a distinct way of delivery and transfer. The music structure differed significantly between the ensembles. The music form ranged from simplicity in the Old-Time ensemble (i.e., A section and B section) to complexity within the Steelpan (i.e., more sections including prelude, interlude, and ending) and Indian ensembles (i.e., unique organization with a prelude, repeated verse, and systematically altering sections). Harmony and chord progression were present in Old-Time and Steelpan ensembles, while Indian music focused on melody. In Indian ensembles, students approached pitches, emphasizing certain notes, played along with an

241

accompanied drone of the tonic, and corresponded to the tabla's rhythm, thinking of the music horizontally. The use of percussion instruments and understanding complex rhythms were common in Indian and Steelpan ensembles, but not in the Old-Time ensemble, which used bass, guitar, and ukulele to maintain rhythm with simple and easy-to-understand patterns. The Indian ensemble started with a singing activity using vocalization and Indian solfège syllables, while the Steelpan ensemble occasionally applied vocalization techniques or used lyrics when students struggled with a part. In the Old-Time ensemble, students engaged in participatory singing most of the time. Improvisation and ornamentation styles varied among the ensembles as well. The seating arrangement and presentation during performances also differed. Historical, social, and cultural aspects were entirely different between these ensembles, adding uniqueness and distinctiveness. The level of concentration and the way of addressing these aspects in the ensemble varied among the directors (i.e., the way they teach the form, making arrangements, the harmony [if any] and the melody, or ornamentation, etc.). Hence, despite common strategies and principles of oral tradition used by the directors, assuming these ensembles teach the same thing or they are the same, might not be appropriate. Recognizing common strategies and acknowledging variations in each music could help students develop common skills from different musical perspectives, while also advocating for the necessity of having and expanding music ensembles that represent various music traditions within the School.

The findings suggested that students have derived great value from their experiences within the ensemble. Students were able to develop diverse music skills, experience new ways of learning through various aspects of oral tradition, access and learn new instruments, and explore different perspectives on music and its components and framework. Some students compared their experiences in ensembles to more formal classical music settings and noted the flexibility

and relaxed atmosphere during rehearsals and public performances as positive and encouraging aspects. These feelings were also shared by other participants who appreciated the fun, emotional, and communal nature of these ensembles. Students also valued the exposure to historical and cultural contexts facilitated by their directors, which deepened their understanding of the music and expanded their musical horizons. Some students also highlighted the importance of engaging with music within the community, as it motivated different forms of learning and fostered social interactions and a sense of belonging. Students, overall, appreciated the immersive and comprehensive environment of their ensemble experiences, which helped them develop musical, social, and professional skills, leading to a greater awareness and understanding of music and its cultural significance.

Interestingly, the results and skills acquired by students in these ensembles align with the aims and premises outlined in the 2014 Manifesto of the Taskforce of the College Music Society for undergraduate music program curricula reform (see Campbell et al., 2016). Music teachers in Western settings could benefit from these experiences and apply some of these activities in their instruction. For example, they could have students lead and make arrangements, develop more flexible rehearsals with room for fun and enjoyment, include discussions about historical and cultural events associated with music, and incorporate creative activities. Therefor e, students' experiences within these ensembles should be highly considered to foster and improve the integration of these ensembles within the School. Through this observation, I was able to recognize strong and encouraging connections between students' accomplishments, directors' objectives and actions, and the ensembles' intended purposes within the School of Music. However, this connection and "temporary success" cannot be sustained without addressing the

gaps in foundational planning, active support, and recognition; achieving this is not only essential but also possible!

Personal Reflection

I am deeply appreciative of the priceless learning experiences that I gained throughout the duration of this study from the collective wisdom of ensemble directors, students, and my professors. This valuable knowledge and these insights inspired, enhanced, and reformed my educational practices. I acknowledge that the starting point for any change begins within oneself. Although I might not have had control to change all aspects impacting the Middle Eastern Ensemble, I was at least able to make improvements in my own instruction and interactions.

I learned from this study that the Middle Eastern Ensemble should be unique not only in its music but also in its teaching and learning practices. To make it distinct from other settings in the School, the ensemble's goals and purposes should encompass more than just performance. Thus, I had put considerable contemplation into developing new expansions and varied class activities that could carry an effective balance between several aspects of Arabic music and its culture with no need to adhere to the prevailing norms at the School. I started by reforming my course syllabus and class expectations in a way that encouraged class participation and learning about different aspects of Arabic music more than just performing music over sheet music to reach the end of the semester performance. The revised syllabus highlights that students are expected to learn diverse Arabic music sonic elements and apply them in the context of songs or musical pieces. It enhances students' expectation to engage with musical elements orally and interact actively with listening materials to help them be active participants during the rehearsals.

Additionally, a section related to public performance clarifies that it is an option during the semester and depends on students' progress and interests, giving them the flexibility to

choose whether or not to perform or explore multiple performance opportunities. Taking into consideration the diverse abilities, needs, and backgrounds of students, I have specified in the syllabus that the assessment strategy and performance rubric can be modified and adjusted throughout the semester through discussion and negotiation with students, allowing them to fit it into their preferences and needs. I also made the decision to simplify my music repertoire and narrow it to only seven tunes that encompass a mix of easy to moderate performance level skills, aiming to facilitate effective engagement with the learning of Arabic music components, theory, history, and culture. I outlined in the syllabus that there will be flexibility to either decrease or increase the number of tunes depending on our progress throughout the semester so that we could prevent the development of unnecessary stress or pressure during the course.

I maintained the use of sheet music because I recognized its importance in addressing certain elements of Arabic notation, such as unique accidentals (half-sharps or half-flats), uncommon key signatures with these accidentals, odd time signatures (7/8, 10/8, or 13/8, etc.), and syncopated rhythms. These aspects are challenging even with sheet music and require active oral engagement with the music, which would provide valuable opportunities to enhance sight-reading skills for some students. Although I initially omitted the rote to note strategy in certain semesters, I reconsidered using it in the sequence of activities. Students now begin each class session by engaging with music components orally/aurally before applying them in a tune. Sheet music serves as a skeleton framework to help students understand the forms, arrangements, and music analysis. Students would have additional activities designed to teach them how to incorporate ornaments and variations into the melody, emphasizing reliance on their ears rather than solely on sheet music. Key aspects of my instruction that I did not change over the semesters included Arabic singing activities, ornament techniques, taqasim and improvisation,

245

and the practice of each student leading or co-leading a tune, while I reintegrated theory and history presentations into my instruction after excluding them in certain semesters. Addressing a weakness in my instruction, where melodic instrument players used to understand the melodic structure of Arabic music better than its rhythmic structure, I provided percussion instruments for all students during the oral sequence to improve their understanding of the rhythmic structure of the music.

I also noticed that some students encountered challenges in grasping and perceiving quarter tones. Thus, I incorporated additional exercises and activities to enhance these skills. At the beginning of each semester, I recognized from the facial expressions of certain students that they initially struggled to "accept" quarter tones when exposed to them for the first time. I use the term "accept" intentionally here because their ears may perceive these pitches as out of tune and incompatible with the musical system to which they are accustomed. Even when assigned with playing or singing, for example, E half flat, their ears tend to guide them to produce E flat and struggle to match the correct sound of E half flat produced by my or another instrument simultaneously. Typically, it takes most students approximately a month of active listening and practice to gradually accept, hear, and accurately play quarter tones. However, the timeframe for others may vary, with some taking a shorter or longer duration to develop proficiency in this aspect. Therefore, I incorporated quarter tone activities into every rehearsal in my current instruction. These activities would allow students to realize that diverse musical systems exist, and what may be perceived as incorrect or out of tune in one system could be entirely appropriate and carry significance and meanings in other musical contexts.

This study made me encourage active participation, foster a collaborative learning atmosphere, and strive to create opportunities for students to explore and experiment within the

246

ensemble to promote their musical growth and nurture their individual creativity. Believing that the Middle Eastern Ensemble should encompass more than just performance, I put considerable effort into designing all these varied class activities so that I could balance all these aspects. I turned the ensemble into a "general music class" to offer students the chance to learn Arabic music components and theory, play both melodic and percussion instruments, switch between different instruments, engage in Arabic singing, explore improvisation and creative activities, enhance leadership skills, and deepen their cultural awareness and understanding. Given the problematic nature of terminology, I would better describe the ensemble as a "general Arabic music" or just "Arabic music" course. I believe that teaching and learning about diverse music styles and traditions can take multiple forms and should not be limited to a singular approach or course, such as the prevailing "ensemble" context. I think changing the course label could positively influence students' expectations and empower teachers to design instruction that appropriately represents the rich culture and values of their music.

Interestingly, by adopting this approach and focusing on learning about musical elements before applying them in the context of songs, public performances naturally emerged as a result of our learning engagement throughout the semester. My students and I participated in three distinct events at the end of Spring 2023, each offering unique benefits for the students. One took place in the recital hall, another in the community at a local farmers market, and a collaborative performance with Dr. Cecilia's seventh and eighth graders in her public school. For the recital hall concert, I departed from the usual formal format and opted for a more educational and participatory approach. Students were encouraged to wear any colored shirt instead of formal black attire. I took pauses between tunes to talk about the music and explain the meaning, cultural, and historical aspects of some tunes to engage the audience in the musical contexts. I

247

also encouraged audience engagement by inviting them to clap and hum melodies with us in an attempt to mirror the style of public performances in my country. Students at this concert played assigned tunes, led individual tunes with improvisation, sang in Arabic, and participated in collaborative improvisation and drum circles on stage. Compared to my efforts to make the recital hall concert less stressful, some students noted that the experiences in community and public school performances felt more casual, less stressful, and more enjoyable. This observation fascinated me because it appeared that the nature of the recital hall setting inherently introduces a degree of pressure when performing in the spotlight.

In addition to changing some of my instructional practices, I took steps to enhance my engagement with the School of Music community and beyond, aiming to raise awareness and advocate for the Middle Eastern Ensemble. Alongside regular communication with Dr. John, I increased my communication with the School of Music director, administration and School personnel, and some music faculty, reaching out for assistance, support, and informing them about specific events or performances by the ensemble. The positive and encouraging responses I received emphasized the genuine care and interest people have shown toward me and the ensemble. Moreover, I have expanded my collaboration within both the School of Music and the broader community, and I held presentations in various university courses and Arabic community clubs to promote awareness of the Middle Eastern Ensemble's offerings at the School of Music. Lastly, I intensified my advocacy efforts for the ensemble's continuation at the school among my professors and colleagues. I hope this research will be considered as a tool for advocacy as I emphasize the importance of sustaining the Middle Eastern Ensemble (along with other ensembles) even after my departure, as I firmly believe a course should not be discontinued solely due to a teacher's departure.

248

Conclusion

Through my research, I aimed to shed light on the experience of the integration of music ensembles from diverse cultures at the School of Music. I aimed to foster a deeper understanding and enhance awareness of their significance, challenges and needs, unique teaching and learning milieu, and influences on students. I presented critical reviews and discussions about issues of social justice and multicultural music education to examine to what extent our current policies, practices, and decisions at the School of Music contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding diversity, inclusion, and equity in the higher music education system. By sharing the untold stories of these ensembles, directors, and students, I hoped to capture people's attention to inspire positive and active change that encourages a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable milieu within the School of Music and beyond. It is my firm belief that by embracing and incorporating diverse musical traditions into our music programs and giving them equitable opportunities and access, music schools can expand their musical horizons, diversify the sounds, and deepen cultural understanding that promote a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment where everyone feels genuinely valued and represented. Furthermore, I am very optimistic because the transformation observed in music education students' experiences can serve as a powerful indicator for future, radical shifts in the prevailing paradigm of music schools, as these students will eventually become the future educators and leaders in the music education world. Therefore, deep reflection, starting from administrative to classroom levels, on the essence of music teaching and learning experiences within these types of ensembles and their comparison with other settings at music schools, would certainly highlight their significance within the educational setting and pave the way for new directions in music education and foster effective, fruitful transformations.

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