

MMAP - Music Education Position Paper

We begin with a sequence of statements

1. Flourishing societies/communities and flourishing individuals are the ones that are able to renew themselves as they face changing situations. As they grow they become richer in experiences and understanding, and are able to accept a wider range of diversity.

Question: is this a matter of dispute?

If not, and if we accept this to be the case -

2. An appreciation of musical diversity is good for the individual and good for society, since it enriches the lives of both. Out of diversity comes new creation, and cultural and personal renewal.

Question: is this a matter of dispute?

If not, and if we accept this to be the case -

3. Since education is about preparing the individual for a fulfilled and rich life in a social situation, and about the enriching of society through the multiplication of this, then musical diversity is a valuable part of the education process.

Question: is this a matter of dispute?

We may discuss and dispute any of the above statements. It is important that they are tested since they form the basis of what follows.

We next have three fundamental questions to answer

1. To what extent do we include in our formal education systems the opportunity for young people to understand a diverse collection of musics?

Understanding can be achieved through listening and discussion, but better through the making of music. What opportunities are there for either or both?

Subsidiary question: if we do, or do not, include a range of musics in our educational systems, what does this tell us about the values and attitudes of society, or of those who determine social priorities?

2. To what extent do people (young and older) have the opportunity to understand a diverse range of musics outside the formal education system?

Who might be providing such opportunities? To what extent are they supported by or tolerated by the formal systems we have? To what extent are they based locally and to what extent overseas?

3. Do music educators have the skills to help people understand a diverse range of musics?

What systems are in place to teach teachers about teaching musical diversity? If community-based musicians are the experts, how do they fit into our music education systems?

Subsidiary question: to what extent are other resources (music, musical experiences, instruments, appropriate spaces) available to support learning across a range of diverse musics?

Further, more specific questions

1. Do our music education programmes reflect the diversity of music experienced by young people today? Should they? Shouldn't they? How does education interface with reality in this respect?
2. What effect does global pop music have on education systems, and on what teachers and learners bring to the classroom? Is it a threat or an opportunity?
3. To what extent is local music (of the community, of the nation, of indigenous people, of migrant communities) included in education? To what extent should it be? To what extent can it be?

And last but not least -

What examples can we find, across the world of music education, of programmes that bring together a range of musics in a positive and successful way? What can we learn from such programmes?

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