

Musical Diversity: Looking Back...Looking Forward

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## **Musical Diversity and Education**

Diversity means differentiation  
Differentiation means progress (Herbert Spencer)

### **Provocation**

Music is a language that everybody understands.

We all know this enthusiastic propagation from the heart of cultural idealism.

The problem: In this generalisation it is simply a way of stultification (Fe to belie social differences) in at least two ways

### **Music is a communication to be learned**

Music as an art form is a highly sophisticated system for which you have to learn an elaborated language to take part. (which can happen in training programs of Higher Music Institutions as well as in peer-oriented informal learning processes take)

### **Musical communication has a context**

There is nothing like pure music. It always takes place under given circumstances which decide upon the production, distribution and perception.

### **It's the cultural context, stupid**

The problem is not the music from other cultural origin, when Kabuki- or No-music sounds strange ion our ears - It is often the music next door, we do not or do not want to understand.

We feel intuitively that the cultural context, in which this or that music is played decides upon social in- or exclusion.

Therefore the belonging to different social strata and its musical priorities seem to be still decisive.

Recent research on the importance of "family capital" (to give an example from an initiative of Creative Partnerships England)

So it is not the music as such but music in specific contexts that makes the difference

## **Music produces difference**

More: Music is actively used to produce difference – Otherwise music wouldn't play such an important role in particular youth culture scenes

To generalise: Culture as a mean to unite people, but also to exclude

This is not something new: The European bourgeois has found a own way of symbolic inclusion and exclusion, called taste (habitués)

This is even true for music aficionados who define differences of the reproduction of classical music (assessment of different interpretations of Bach's Matthäus Passion Erwin Ortner, Nicolaus Harnoncourt or Philip Herreweghe might produce social conflicts )

In our days taste has become life-style, which is (among others) defined by selective perception of what we see or hear (example: the film with the gorilla)

This ability to make use of selective perception can become a social advantage

## **Sen's plea for inter-culturality or "culture" is nothing special**

(Amartya Sen: Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny):

We all grew up in a particular cultural context – that does not make us particular

Cultural education is not just about learning to appreciate "one's own culture" but to get beyond and find a place where you can reflect your cultural belonging.

This seems for Sen a prerequisite to communicate with those who have another cultural background

And this is exactly the role of the arts as aesthetic representations of universality in the frame of the European enlightenment movement

## **On different "functions" of music in school**

The production of uniformity of the school of the industrial age – make the learner to belong to this or that social group – Music has an important role to play to fulfil this task

## **Contradictory pedagogic intentions**

There are different pedagogic intentions when dealing with music in school:

One is to make use of music for social integration. (In this context we discuss music as a mean for the production of cultural identity, peace, each kind of anti-radicalness,.....) Not to stand out but fulfil the respective role in the social group

One is to associate music with difference, to learn to stand strangeness, to learn to accept we are all different and to the very end we are alone (we can feel that in rare moments, were we are confronted with music in a cathartic situation, we know we are deadly alone, but we can stand that)

And in a new culture of learning and teaching in the post-industrial era we are talking about individualisation: How pedagogy can contribute? And how music and music education?

### **The ability to differentiate is exactly what makes the arts**

When mass production and mass consumption is not any more the dominant paradigm schools are “producing” the wrong people.

The major challenge for the traditional school system is to offer a curriculum that takes into account and even cultivate the existing differences (and by that the individual strengths of the learners) without forgetting about the production not of uniformity but communalities.

In a school of individuality the arts and so also music as an art form could play a decisive role. This is the positive message

At the same time – when schools are still in doubt how to manage this paradigm change, it is exactly the differentiating character of the arts which makes it so difficult to deal with the arts in school when it produces difference in a system that is based on uniformity.

At the same time - when lacking a sociological qualification - it is difficult for music teachers to tackle the context of music in an appropriate way.

The result is a kind of naivety, which makes the subject less relevant than it could be in terms of the increasing need to implement a new culture of learning and teaching.

### **Fears and hopes**

What we should avoid is a tendency to forget about the artistic dimension in music education. (It would be a contribution to the re-culturalisation and re-nationalisation against the European integration process)