UNEVEN WORLDS, NEW MINORITISATIONS, INTERSECTIONAL PRIVILEGE:
QUESTIONING DIFFERENT KINDS OF 'GLOBAL' IN MUSICAL TRANSMISSION PROCESSES

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Abstract

This essay considers diverse applications of the term 'global' in higher education music pedagogies across unevenly calibrated playing fields in different classrooms beyond geo-cultural territories, and different geo-cultural voices within the same classroom. Particularly, I question motivations for self-cultivation and assumptions about cultural canons, as well as musical and educational doxa, from the perspectives of transnational East and Southeast Asian participants. Often, their encounters of an idealised 'Global North', 'Global West' or even 'New Global Self' can lead to surprising articulations and expectations superficially parsed as 'politically conservative' – due to both insufficient/uneven decolonisation and the presence of post-critical, post-decolonial pragmatics. In trying to find a common ground for meaningful conversations between parties whose education journeys have been wildly different and unequally made, I push for grounded and co-curated learnings via intersubjective interrogations of how diverse lived experiences, structural privileges and conscious investment in one's own personal development can lead to the same shared musical moment in the classroom. I look for collective and care-sensitive extrapolations from these shared moments into broader insights on deconstructing systemic difference, commonality and intersectionality in empathetic and community-centred ways.

Keywords

Global music history, global inequalities, music education, uneven decolonisation, inclusion

BEYOND BANDWAGONS: NEW LABELS, OLD DISCIPLINES, CHANGING FIELDS

The term 'global' is often deployed as a popular shorthand for 'total world coverage' in juxtaposition with concepts such as 'international', 'intercultural' or 'transnational'. Often, in general parlance, the latter three terms allow for more particularist observations of politico-cultural exchanges, while the former connotes more breadth. This article considers the challenges of putting into practice different understandings of the term 'global' in musical transmission processes across different classrooms around the world (selected as case studies). To a smaller extent, it looks at the shaping of curricula of would-be 'global' music histories in different tertiary educational institutions. To a larger extent, it rethinks what 'global' means in rapidly diversifying student communities and interactions in unevenly calibrated landscapes. I consider these 'unevenly global' communities not only in Anglo-American engagements, but also in musical transmission environments across various parts of the world – particularly, the United Kingdom, Europe and South/East Asia.

In my practice as an admittedly devolving ethnomusicologist, I have tended to shy away from the term 'global'. Instead, I prefer to adopt lenses of cultural diversity/exchange and site-specific ethnographic/activist-led participation (Nettl, 2010; Diamond & Castelo Branco,

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2021, Tan Sooi Beng, 2021: 131-150) in tandem with broader past and present decolonial approaches (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, 1992; Yunkaporta, 2009; Shzr Ee Tan, 2021). Still, traditionally ethnomusicological 'area-studies-based' pedagogies (even if they account for glocalisation and hybridity) are also often problematic, especially in the neocolonial pitfalls of musical ghettoization and lack of overarching perspectives (Stobart et al, 2008; Araujo, 2017: 67-79). As we move into new discourses of mediatisation and technologisation amidst new waves of political reconfigurations that have re-centred globalities (Chen, 2010; Chua, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2002), the need for variously scaled considerations of what 'global' means today in musical transmission has become ever more important. What can an ethnomusicologist like myself contribute to the emerging 'global music history' phenomenon in music education, which is fast becoming a bandwagon? I could delve into old debates of disciplinary labels and ontologies, arguing over 'who got there first' in would-be ethnomusicological vs. musicological 'takes' on mainstreaming curricular diversity in worldwide, postcolonial or decolonial terms. I could present an extended critique of the development of now much-problematised 'world music' survey courses in old-school ethnomusicology programmes (conducted efficiently in Krüger 2017; Campbell & Lum 2019). Or, I could cast the net much wider in a more philosophically democratic intervention, and consider alternative institutions/pathways/experiences of learning via humanitarian, religious and even anti-methodical scoping. However, I focus instead on current methodological and classroom parsings of 'global musics' and 'global music histories' by recounting some of my own recent knowledge transmission experiences in rapidly – and unevenly – diversifying musical classrooms in the Higher Education sector of the U.K.

Often, here, the hegemonic influence of the Western art music canon remains a huge shadow. In practical terms, this means that in institutionalised education anywhere across the world, the philosophical/ontological differences between the disciplines of global music history, ethnomusicology, decolonising and multicultural/intercultural pedagogies are easily outweighed by their pedagogical similarities. At least, in terms of end-goals and political positionings, both global music pedagogies and ethnomusicological approaches serve to offer the bottom line of diversifying practices and knowledge transmission.

A second reality, of course, is that in all reassessments of multiple narratives, histories today are necessarily encountered as global in their coming into contemporary politico-economic manifestation: indeed, *all* musics are global and glocal in their relative situation of 'place' or geo-cultural position in a post-digital age that has seen intersecting flows of post/de/colonial resource deployment/extraction, migration, conflict and trade. More importantly, music classrooms today are increasingly extrapolated beyond a single geo-cultural presence in 'X space and X time', even as music programmes are mushrooming in universities across all corners of the world.[2] The question, then, one asks is: from *whose* vantage point in the world are we understanding the word 'global'? How do different kinds of 'global' mesh with newer iterations of relative identities and relative privilege in the classroom? How do these new intersectionalities function alongside messy histories and music-educational transformations – as Hilder (2020) reminds us of – made in the name of progressivity?

Can we be truly global? Whose `Global' Music History?

First things first: I admit that I will never be able to teach a 'fully' or 'ideal' global history, nor a truly 'politically-correct' curriculum with regards to representation by lived experience. Instead, I focus on intersectional concerns here: particularly, how notions of musical 'progressivity' (and some might say musical 'wokeness') intersect with notions of 'global'. These are

[2] Though some might argue that these bodies have always been around, existing separately from 'Westernised' constructions.

differently parsed across different geo-cultural and age demographics, and in turn determine the conversational frontiers tied to unevenly 'global' teaching methodologies.

First, and specifically, I consider subtly relevelled classrooms where Gen Z communities (born after 2000) from Anglo-American and European backgrounds are primary members and at least one half of a putative classroom demographic. Often, these communities view 'progressive' music programmes that include diverse and 'global' content as par for the course. But whether this demographic sees an in-principle *need for* – as opposed to a *personal desire for/interest in,* or, damningly, *actual presence of* – curricular diversity, are slightly different matters. Often, here, 'progressive' (and by extension globally diverse) musical curricula *is* built into pedagogical rhetoric and folded into the mainstream doxa of tertiary music education, at least in name. This much can be observed in many global North music departments post-1990s, following the advent of (now not so) New Musicology and so-called 'Ethnomusicological' turns, pre-global music history.

But a paradox persists: what exactly remains 'new' – or 'diverse' – as opposed to 'minoritized', here? Critically, pedagogical moves today towards 'global' curricular and music disciplinary revisions become all-too-quickly ensconced within the unrealised legacies of earlier, late 20th-century musical provocations – whether or not one sees these as still bearing teeth. Often, their scope for challenging narratives is limned quickly as having happened in the 'past', and are seen as *simply that* by younger generations: that figures such as McClary (2007) and Nettl et al. (2010) had already made their mark four decades ago; that their 'old battles' are valued as somewhat nostalgic skirmishes – if also as 'historic' wars. And yet – the reality is that gender inequality (amidst other kinds of inequality) is still very much operating in music practice, education and research. Indeed, the world at large is nowhere near evenly recalibrated in opportunity and access; the battles, even if 'old', have never really been over. Global music is dead, long live global music.

As far as my article is intended, this is exactly where the 'other half' of an unevenly globalized higher education classroom comes in at critical play. For many pre-university music students receiving early music education outside of the global North, the so-called progressive discourses offered by new musicology and ethnomusicology of the 1990s (and now, global music history) have never really been bedded into curricular development or knowledge transmission – for reasons of neocoloniality *as well as* postcoloniality. Some might even argue that the class-exacerbated neocolonial practices in the global South constitute part of the problematic reification of ongoing gender, race and class inequalities, which global North-bred Gen Z demographics dismiss as 'old concerns'. And yet, somehow, Gen Z communities of the global South or the general postcolonial world will still have to find their own voices and grounded experiences, when they may one day be thrust as an 'overseas student' into changing fields of what may appear as a 'suddenly woke' classroom in the global North. Or they are asked to stake their positions in the geo-culturally ambiguous space of a Zoom meeting.

I have seen, for example, how many university-level music students hailing from South or East Asia – whether in the same classroom with Anglo-American-raised students – paradoxically choose not to embrace or accept 'progressive' trends in musico-curricular cultural diversification for reasons of erroneously presumed glocalised irrelevance passed off as 'intergenerational knowledge gaps'. Sometimes, this is deliberately presented as a turning of tables of power, on concepts and musical practices of 'the West'. This can be limned in how 'the West' is now the object being commodified and romanticized rather than 'learnt from'. 'The West' is conscientiously and conspicuously consumed (like one might watch a cosy Edwardian English period TV drama), neatly packaged in a cultural time warp of a self-contained and decontextualised 'academic experience product' in a neoliberal market.

One might also argue that even outside of the Anglo-American and European world, despite the efforts of new pedagogies of diversification, the Western art music canon continues to

hold hegemonic sway as a kind of cultural luxury brand/genre. Bach, Mozart and Beethoven are still, often, understood – and fetishized in specific glocal ways – as 'the only' varieties of 'real' classical or universal music across many parts of the globe, not least in postcolonial states and aspirationally cosmopolitan territories. Thanks to vestigial neo-imperialist sympathies held among postcolonial communities, global music studies is paradoxically now also often wilfully misunderstood, and relegated to the problematic and (self)exoticized lower-status category of 'non-Western music'. Too often, outside of the global North, progressive or diversity-led curricular developments are bemusedly parsed as a strange pet project of 'woke white people'/'the West'/'liberals'.

To be sure, such tensions in geo-cultural musical transmission dynamics eventually come to intercontinental and intercultural flash points. A diasporic member of the so-called East who may have, for example, intergenerationally migrated to and established themselves in the 'West' might feel head-on ambivalence and confusion: 25 years ago, such was my own trajectory in de-programming my own musical neocoloniality upon coming to live in non-inclusive and often discriminatory musical environments upon seeking further education in the UK in the late 1990s.

Fast forward till today, then, where the neocolonialities still persist but in slightly shifted intergenerational guises: what happens when such differently scaled global intersubjectivities come to discord in a single classroom two decades later? Putative answers can first be found in considering *where* these classrooms are in the first place, and how they are unevenly global in membership and provision of opportunity. Here, I draw from my own experiences addressing students in different languages and spaces over the past 15 years. I use inductive and ethnographic methods, focusing on qualitative analysis of case studies, recollections of conversations and other phenomena. I describe my experiences in a socially progressive music department within the U.K., and also in classrooms of rising student recruitment grounds in South/East Asia. The sites of my teachings/learnings range from closed workshops 'for all undergraduate years' in a prestigious conservatory in China, to plenary lectures to a 300-strong university crowd of non-music majors in a second-tier Chinese city. I also include presentations to aspirationally cosmopolitan performance diploma students in Southeast Asia, communications with a classroom of 90% young women in a small town in East Asia, and, finally, conversations with eager postgraduate fellow learners in my current place of employ of a large(ish) music department just outside London.

Each of these experiences – reflecting interactions with different generations across more than a decade of sociopolitical change and cultural trends, and with necessarily varied attending cultural doxa – have led me to push for, at some level, co-curatorial pedagogies around teaching different kinds of global musics, and deploying various pedagogical styles to different groups. It also goes without saying that constant self-care and group-care (Hilder, 2020) must be exercised when addressing mixed cohorts and when facilitating tricky, translated conversations in unlevelled playing fields within a single space that is contextually always extrapolated – as I hope to show below.

The Masters of Music Classroom in the United Kingdom

One of the greatest pleasures of my current practice within the UK, in a mid-sized college, can be found in my work with Master's students on an English-language mediated Music program with a longstanding reputation for research. Until recent years, a good proportion of students in these settings have come from white middle-class backgrounds, and have trained within the same institution or have been schooled in a similar stream. This also often means that they tend to be as sociopolitically engaged, as they are intellectually and articulately invested in their personal(ized) postgraduate studies. Relatively cosy class sizes of 20 per yearly

cohort and even smaller seminar groups of –five to seven individuals per tutorial allow for deep work and freestyle mutual learning. Care-centred critical evaluations of music practices are par for the course in our class discussions, as are conversations about the relevance of music practices to ongoing cultural war debates.

Grand, self-aware questions around what a truly 'global' music discourse (if not always named as such) should constitute are a part of regular discussions. Debates are held on the *de rigeur* theme of decolonisation, and posed in a compulsory introductory module in what I hope are safe spaces afforded by the small group sizes. In such settings, these discussions are almost always intersectional in nature. Geo-cultural diversity in the musical classroom is often looked at in tandem with issues of class, gender – and more recently, intergenerational precarity and climate change. In such classroom scenarios, topics that we have co-curated with a focus on impact include: What should a music curriculum look like – as opposed to professional manifestations of music-making in societies around the world, in each student's personal experience? Are all our experiences similar, and why/not? Do people and grade-school teachers mean Western art music when they refer to 'music', or 'classical music', and why? What are the different kinds of classical musics around the world, and why are they called as such? Can we explore musics that do not fit under the 'Western art' category without resorting to default-negative definitions?

GLOBAL MUSIC HISTORY AS A 'WESTERN' DISCOURSE

Such discipline-reflexive existential questions are likely the staple of many graduate programs in the U.K. and the U.S. that think of themselves as progressive. Certainly, in the U.K., discussions start from a comfortable 'mid-left-of-centre' baseline. But bring these discussions into a different playing field in, for example, East or Southeast Asia, and one receives a different set of responses. My attempts to introduce coverage or discussion of global music histories, decolonisation and modules outside the Western art canon with music major students enrolled in China and Singapore are sometimes met with pitying stares. Putting myself in the shoes of these students who have been societally and neocolonialistically schooled for the Western art canon, I see them thinking of me as a naïve and over-'woke' Chinese woman who has refused to understand that the romantic fantasy of Western art music remained, for some of them, best contained and unproblematised as a neat little bag of beautiful aesthetics and unpoliticised life-journey-making – and for a good reason, too. Indeed, from a practical perspective, one should also realise that Western art music, still, realistically offers many people outside of Europe, the U.K. and U.S. huge opportunities for class leverage in the game of chasing social mobility, in ways that vernacular genres are still not yet able to.

On the surface, such seeming reluctance to deal with 'more important questions' of musical multiculturalism and progressivity by undoubtedly conscientious, hardworking (and sometimes cynical) students in South/East Asia remind me of the Korean American author Cathy Park Hong's experience with model minority-type East Asian women in some of her U.S. college classes (Hong 2020). Controversially, Hong describes them as sitting there 'meekly like mice with nice hair' as she desperately pushes them to speak up, or 'they'll [white people will] walk all over you!'

I have not reached Hong's point of frustration, but realise that my perceived lack of critical responses observed in some students may come from a time-space where cultural regimes are both insufficiently decolonised and post-decolonised. To be sure, much can be said about different classroom response/interaction styles geo-culturally speaking, and how self-essentialised rising to stereotypes of 'model minority' can often play into the behavioural tropes. These are complicated by parallel issues of language confidence affecting public-speaking inclinations where unaired thoughts around clinging to a beloved canon are actually, often, rich, sophisticated – and as much anxiety- and anger-fuelled as they are also hope-fuelled.

However, I also suspect that other kinds of nuanced sociopolitics are at play. To start with, the category of 'international student' in the Global North (which some see as shorthand for 'East Asian' and especially 'Chinese student') is not a monolithic one. Many South/East Asian music students – especially those with Chinese/class privilege, growing up Asian in Asian-dominant environments – are often not always placed in the position of being a cultural minority in their immediate study environment, unlike with transnationals such as myself today, operating across two continents in double consciousness (Gilroy 1993) – and, more recently thanks to the non-spaces of Zoom and MS Teams – triple consciousness. These 'global' students – learning music both in the territories of their birth and beyond, and often, in 'overseas student' settings in the U.K., Europe and the U.S., have come to make up a rising, resilient and economically advantaged sector of a particular kind of postcolonial global majority. They have also come to the table with vastly different, individually valid trajectories and personal journeys of musical growth, self-cultivation, family/gender expectations and hopes/fears/desires – including specific and differentiated constructions of 'the West' as a culture to be actively devoured, in addition to simply 'appreciated'.

'WESTERN ART MUSIC' CONSUMED OUTSIDE 'THE WEST'

Elaborating on a previous point: due to colonial legacies retained in education systems in territories like Anglophone Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia, and the sprawling reach of institutions offering graded 'set-work' certification of performance exams such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) in China, Singapore and Malaysia, it is not surprising that Western art music has retained a hegemonic status ventriloquising for all musics. As Mina Yang (2014) writes, Western art music is often projected falsely as 'universal', as a form of cultural doxa.

However, this structuration is complexified by the fact many music students in economically thriving East/Southeast Asian territories have also been brought up with enough local sociopolitical capital to parse Western art music with an intersectionally and unintentionally decolonial sensibility. Taking a leaf from Shelby Chan's book on constructions of 'Western theatre' in Southern Chinese Hong Kong (Chan 2015), I argue that Western art music in, for example, economically prosperous South/East Asian states functions less as an 'other' culture, than as something 'formerly foreign', which has now been inoculated, neutralised and adapted into the fabric of everyday life. For many music practitioners/students in this category (notably in the territories of Singapore, Malaysia and urban China), Western art music has become a genre which everyone – as aspirationally cosmopolitan citizens of the world (Tan 2019) – can partake of… *if* they *wanted* to. It has not only become a 'globally-available' vehicle of communication which *all* aspirational cosmopolitans could aesthetically appreciate, to various points of sophistication if they so desired, but it has also become a vehicle for artistic expression and production *by* aspirational communities in South/East Asia. Often, this appreciation is completed to the goals of poignant personal pleasures, status-making and cultural diplomacy. (This much is so in the case, for example, of Chloe Chua from Singapore, or TwoSet Violin and Yuja Wang in the wider Sinophone world).

To use an analogy: in the same way that different French, Italian and Spanish cuisines, prepared by Asian-born chefs, have come to be offered as gastronomic *options* alongside other Asian cuisines in Asian cities such as Singapore, urban China, Western art music is offered as a cultural *option* alongside everything and anything from Anglo-American rock to Mando/Cantopop, Game Music and not-so-classical *guzheng.* The relative placement of its cultural capital lies in what unique selling point 'Western Art Music', in its different imaginations and constructions, may offer in spite (or because) of its complicated relationship to postcolonial/decolonial/neocolonial politics.

First, the Bourdieuan framework in which cultural capital is accrued as a signifier of taste, and by extension, class, can be understood here in global amplifications of how Western art

music is exceptionally often deployed as soft power for emerging nation-states hoping to achieve a seat at the big, 'international' table. But there is also a post/decolonial twist at work. I recall conversations with some arts educators in Singapore and Malaysia, for example, who choose to bypass 'the whole decolonization debate' and see post-canonical and diversification initiatives in Southeast Asia as irrelevant to local contexts for reasons of first principles. One tutor based in Asia, who preferred to be anonymous, put it: 'Ultimately, people will still end up reinforcing the concept of 'colonization' in repeating this very word, even if they disclaim it with a little prefix… so why bother using it at all? Just let us teach the canon our own way without all your overseas person's guilt.'[3]

To be sure, different domestic habiti in which music is often consumed as strategically decoupled from (race) politics (such as in socially engineered Singapore, and parts of Japan and China) may also point towards other historical underpinnings alongside colonisation.[4] Separate historical trajectories in Japan, Singapore, China, Indonesia and Malaysia – and for that matter cities in across different parts of the Global South – yield separate relationships to colonisation as well as decolonisation. More critically, they offer different relationships to different courses of national resilience, economic development, cultural/regional re-imaginings and self-positionings on the global stage. This is why perhaps asking questions about decolonising music education in, for example, Malaysia, is missing some of the point. In the same way, bringing in the concept of 'global music studies' may unintendedly detract from the much-needed focus on underfunded local musical cultures; from a Malaysian perspective, the category of 'global' would easily still incorporate Western art music as a dominant representation. As ethnomusicologist Tan Sooi Beng speaks, practices deigned 'decolonial' (by Anglo-American eyes) are 'normal' challenges of everyday music teaching: 'We've been struggling to decolonize and reclaim our local histories and traditions through education ever since the British colonialists left Malaya. We have not used the term 'decolonization' as the process has become part of our daily lives.'[5]

Indeed, in the Global East, and Global South, a pedagogical decrying of the 'Western' canon and calling for decolonial efforts might lead to unexpected responses in musicians and scholars. Within China, for example, I refer to how students in the territory, operating under closely inspected or carefully socially engineered contexts, might argue that there is no need to 'contaminate' their imagined, 'pure world' of aesthetics in music with 'difficult' or even 'tedious politics', given that there is enough of both in the other carefully regulated parts of their lives. More importantly, from a standpoint within China, 'global' might well equate with 'international', 'overseas' and, no less, 'Western' – and would this be any wrong, too?

THE WORLD IN A CLASSROOM: HOLDING SPACE, DEEP DIVES

If, then, it is clear enough that student desires are differently politicised and enculturated according to geo-cultural location and class intersectionalities, what of the variation which lies within the playing field of a single classroom? How do we cope with everyone's different learnings needs and desires?

I speak of emerging classrooms in the U.S. and the U.K. where widening participation from local students of different socioeconomic/ethnic backgrounds are complemented by earnest recruitment from the aforementioned territories of South/East Asia (particularly, China).[6]

3 Interview, August 2021.

4 The Cultural Revolution in China, for example, engendered nationalisations of different kinds of 'people's music', folk musics, 'feudal' music; not least separate (anti)fetishizations of Western art music.

5 Personal communication, 11 September 2021.

6 'Cash Cow, Scapegoat and Model Minority: Chinese Students in the UK'. Forum co-organised by the Centre for Contemporary East Asian Cultural Studies, the University of Nottingham, Royal Holloway and City University of London. 17 July 2021. Events Team of the City University London. 2021. Panel Discussion: Cash

Here, the playing field is extremely unlevelled in intersectional ways, and not only because of the varying affordances of communicating in English as a first, second or third language. In pandemic-impacted work-from-home situations, other factors destabilising the playing field include unequal access to instruments, expensive software and private practice studios. Classroom inclusion dynamics become trickier to manage where different marginalities collide across unique experiences of local students of colour versus the experience of international students (often, also of colour), versus white working class/middle-class students. More recently, in the wake of a global pandemic and rising concerns about precarity and climate change, students are entering the playing field with carefully documented, and also undocumented mental health issues. How is it possible to build inclusive spaces for everyone in the same room, when we approach progressive politics on vastly different terms and have different expectations of a global music education as well as lives/careers afterwards?

Here, I return to my crucible zone of small-group MMus settings in the U.K. The picture of progressive discoursing I had painted in Case Study 1 above needs to be tempered by the fact that learning curves for thoughtful entry into conversations take place across staggered timelines and perspectives for different members of an increasingly international (and increasingly South/East Asian) classroom. What *does* make for helpful facilitation, though, are the relatively cosy tutorial sizes which allow for co-learned content and deep dives into the very intersectional perspectives of the classroom itself. Here, students are given the time and space to extemporise on their musical positionalities and intersubjectivities.

A co-reflection exercise styled as a Learning Contract that I set at the start of each postgraduate year (see Appendix), for example, involves asking participants to brainstorm motivations behind their decision to pursue an extra year of study in the subject of Music. How have they come to invest in their musical learnings this particular stage of specialisation, beyond the standard middle-class pursuit of a basic first degree? Are they responding to a 'calling' in – music research, or teaching? Or is this a placeholder for a comfort zone to defer decisions about career paths 'in the real word'? For students in the workplace returning to higher education, is the degree a sabbatical from work? Or is this a CV 'upgrade' exercise in gaining the musical equivalent of an MBA? For international students, what are their expectations of a year-long course in the U.K.? Could this be an extended 'Eat Pray Love'-style time-out with 'piano practice + concerts at the Barbican' with the option to also tour the musical capitals of Paris and Vienna in the summer (and what would be wrong with that too)? Or – was this a chance to taste 'authentic European culture' – and by extension gain lived experience so as to contextualise their hermeneutic experiences of Western art music as global music? Was this a much-needed opportunity to discover a new self in a different political climate, or refine an already-existing identity, or build new communities together with rare, yet-to-be-discovered kindred spirits?

Where would a 'global' music education fit in here – whether in terms of a South/East Asian student encountering Europe for the first time, or their British and European classmates encountering South/East Asian discourses about music? What would be their different interpretations of a musical canon, and not just of the 'Western art' variety?
Probing the whys and wherefores of individual journeys in music education via autoethnographic accounts in these extremely diverse classrooms, and encouraging students to share differently invested stakes in pursuing music education in the Learning Contract allows for the cross-examining of different musical learning histories. It then paves the way for honest and care-centred exchanges where deeply personal reasons for music learning can be recalibrated and shown to be not-so-personal after all but the result of political and historical extrapolations: indeed, these decisions are almost always rooted in societal, political – and eventually, global – structurations.

Cow, Available at: city.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/2021/06/cash-cow-scapegoat-and-model-minority-chinese-students-in-the-uk, last accessed 15 July 2022.

Deploying probing questions of 'How I got here' (see Appendix), conversations can be steered towards the co-building of knowledge to discuss different entry-points to music learning and resulting/changing musical preferences. Questions can be extrapolated backwards into understandings of each student's specific circumstances – for example of family upbringing, thus inviting explorations of class and ethnic backgrounds in relation to musical opportunities. Or, they can be explained as the random stroke of luck of simply being born in a particular city at a particular time. Or – we can trace histories of one's specific musical schooling in different systems allowing for different levels of affordance: via ABRSM instrumental exams, via 'Great Composer' canons taught in schools, or exposure to local choirs, etc. Or – we could examine gendered experiences and positionalities. At the end of the MMus course, we also review together the initial Learning Contract so as to re-examine perspectives gained and goals achieved or altered.

SELF-NARRATIONS/CO-CURATION AND MUSICAL/GLOBAL INTERSUBJECTIVITIES

I should also add that in this same exercise as a facilitator I often tell my own story. This is carried out in tandem with recent thinking in music education around issues of heutagogy ('learning how to learn'; self-directed learning) and peeragogy (peer-based learning, teaching one another) that examine the need for levelling playing fields. Through lived experience, and intersubjective experiences, educators are repositioned as lifelong and reflexive learners themselves (Blaschke 2012; Rheingold 2014). In my spiel to students, I mention that identifying as a post/decolonial, twice diasporic Singaporean woman with Chinese privilege who first came to the U.K. in the late 1990s with delusions of grandeur. I had once hoped to become a concert pianist. I share that I eventually 'defected to' the discipline of ethnomusicology upon being forced to check my personal beliefs and musical goals following racialised experiences in the U.K. classrooms and rehearsal studios.

I discuss my own story of early guilt over not knowing enough about 'my own culture' when asked about it, in global and geoculturally located readings of the term. But whatever did 'your musical culture/my musical culture' mean? I encourage my students to pose this question to themselves and each other. I share that I began to question notions of cultural parity in the deconstruction of my own perceived Otherness in the 1990s, and looked for multiple and discrete musical experiences of what people have now come to call the Global majority. I attempt to create ground for exchanges on topics such as cultural ownership, global doxa and perspectival takes on musical familiarity. If 'my music' as a transnational Chinese Singaporean was often, for example, assumed to be the *erhu* – and certainly a few 'overseas' students from China in my current place of employment have also retraced similar journeys to pick up this instrument *only* in the course of their U.K. studies – would that make Morris dancing the equivalent for English students (as opposed to Bach or Berio)?

As a postgraduate community, we run through debates on lived postcolonial/global experiences of highly mediatised, hybridised and transculturated music, alongside wildly different lived experiences of race, class and gender in music-making and learning. We ponder musical responses to #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo while deliberately invoking concepts of white fragility alongside notions of Chinese privilege/the new 'Yellow Peril' (Kawabata & Tan 2019). These are brought in not so much as abstract and 'controversial-talking point-only' debates of identity politics, than as real happenings in our very own communities. Further questions we raise together include what was the justification for higher fees paid by overseas students in a music department? Why is Mozart taught in Brazil – or China, or Malaysia? Who in the class uses Tencent Music or BiliBili as opposed to Spotify and Youtube, and why/not?

We share stories about our listening habits/biases and access to different musical opportunities, and understand these in terms of our family socialisations, our support networks and our relations with institutions of different states and governments. We examine our varying linguistic, technological and creative privileges, and our vastly different motivations, hopes and desires. How many of us actually *want* or have the ability to become a 'world class' concert violinist – and whatever does this mean? Who of us would be able to play First Flute – in an orchestra in London, or Malaysia? Which one of us would start a folk-fusion band? Or do a Ph.D.? Or become an entertainment lawyer? Or teach music in a primary school? We invite participants to muse on intergenerational and intersectional standpoints. We consider newer marginalities of Zoomer economic precarity, mental health matters and global climate crises impacting on music discourses. We understand global music histories not only in terms of 'diverse/regional musical content', but also in terms of education and cultural histories, family and societal expectations, tastes and pleasures, prejudices and biases, and hopes and fears.[7]

Often, due to the polemical nature of these discussions, and in commitment to a rarefied form of slow and small-group academic discoursing, curricular content in such sessions tends to activate first on the establishment of political rhetoric, before focused analyses of musical text and practice can proceed. However, the constant grounding of these discussions in the lived journeys of individuals-as-musicians within an increasingly globalised classroom, and the use of co-curated content, allows for the holding of intersubjective experiences and varied, mutually directed accumulations of musical knowledge.

Looking Ahead: New Global Marginalities and Knowledge Transmission?

The crucial question, then, becomes one of what 'global music knowledge transmission' might mean in classrooms that may well be more 'global' in composition, but are unevenly so. So far, my discussion has centred on geocultural variance between the constructions of 'East' and 'West', as opposed to politico-economic realities of the Global North versus the imagined Global South.

Will the future global streams of music learning be inclusive or comprehensive? As political power maps reconfigure with East Asian – but still Global North – territories taking centre stage, where will this leave the Global South and music learnings for, and of, these communities? Returning to my earlier discussions on uneven and diverse processes of globalisation and decolonisation, I wonder how vastly different members of the Black and Global Majority directly contribute to – via their lived experience – the making of conversations on Global music histories in the classrooms. Will these new constituents, who may wholeheartedly play the role of discerning consumer and take up the offers of education marketed as experience-industry products? Will they end up making uneasy or unevenly hierarchised alliances among themselves, and with other local marginalised groups?

Thinking and scoping through the broad and sub-themes of this essay again – from the consideration of different vantage points of what a non-universally desired music education would constitute across large and different tracts of the globe, to the particularities of individuals in a single, cosy classroom of delightfully diverse global individuals, the challenge then becomes not one of whether/how to bring in global conversations about music in response to Eurocentric or Anglocentric mainstream. Rather, it is about how to make space for new kinds of global marginalities as we think about different kinds of new global majorities in music learning.

[7] For reasons of confidentiality, I do not provide discrete information on anecdotes that will identify students.

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APPENDIX 1

LEARNING CONTRACT

1. Why you are on this course? (consider individual motivations)
2. How did you get onto this course? How did you get *here* – the Music Department at Royal Holloway*?* Consider actual circumstances in personal histories: 'hoops' you jumped through; migration. Consider also structural enablements related to the circumstances of your birth, family background and education.
3. What three things do you hope to achieve in your year with us?
4. Why is this important work/why are these important goals for yourself, for people you care about and for society at large? Why music?
5. How are you committed to make this happen? What challenges do you foresee?
6. What about timeplans and interim goals? What three actions will you take next week in relation to your longer-term goals? What actions will you take in the next 3–6 months?
7. What were the biggest surprises and challenges encountered (musically speaking, or not) in the last 5–10 years of your life?
8. What do you think will happen if you do not meet your goals at the end of this year? Do you have a backup plan? What are your alternative options?
9. How/will you build in flexibility of progress in your goal-setting?
10. How do you envisage life after MMus graduation? Where do you see yourself in 1, 3 and 5 years?
11. What are your thoughts on community, mutual support, accountability and resilience apropos of your hopes and desires for a music education/career?