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Peacebuilding Project

MUCE 595

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## Background & Introduction

### *Background*

Urbain's *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics* provides several points of view on the power of music and its' role in healing conflicts across many categories. This text particularly highlights music's role in conflict transformation regarding cultural identity divides.

Chapter 1 starts at the core of what makes music so effective in conflict transformation--empathy. Lawrence touches on ideas of what empathy truly is, our innate ability as humans to empathize, the way in which empathy is heightened and exacerbated by a desire to empathize, and how musicking ties to peacebuilding. Through Lawrence's examination, commonalities are found between Musicking & Peacebuilding: nonviolent communication, empathy, and creation. In Chapter 2, Cohen's work prompts readers to think critically about the way music is commonly viewed as a 'Universal Language,' and the we incorporate outside cultures into our musical endeavors-- is music really a universal language? Is the depth of our intercultural experiences truly empathetic, authentic, and respectful? Are we truly teaching empathy, diversity, and openness, or are we making a half-hearted attempt at 'peace-building' and appropriating culture, without treating it's music with the respect and full examination it deserves to be truly 'peaceful' and empathetic? Chapter 3 further extrapolates some questions regarding the authenticity with which Westerners tend to use music from other cultures (shallowly, inauthentically, without proper attention to the values that are embedded within it). Boyce-Tillman provides five lenses of the music experience for which we should pay close attention to: materials, expression, construction, values, and spirituality. Oftentimes, we as Westerners neglect to take all of these lenses into consideration; we just do what we do best, and that is simply take [the music] and do what we want with it. Boyce-Tillman places a heavy emphasis on values surrounding music, which I believe encompasses the other four lenses. We must treat music that does not belong to us with upmost respect to the values that surround it in its original form in order to use it in the name of peacebuilding. Chapter 4 shows what can happen when we approach cross-cultural work with the proper respect to all of its values: a feeling of transcendent, 'beyond the ordinary,' ethereal healing. In this chapter, Galtung talks of music's power to uplift, unite, and create peace.

The next four chapters examine ways in music has been used for peace, as well as the opposite. Chapter 5 tells of the important role of music in healing South African conflicts, as music was the most accurate reflection of societal issues amongst white and black South Africans. It allowed both parties to examine the past in a way that lead to empathetic understanding and realizations between them-- realizations they would not have come to if they didn't find those commonalities through music. Chapter 6 recounts the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the creation and spread of "We Shall Overcome," which has survived the decades and continuously serves as a uniting, healing anthem across social movements. Chapter 7 sheds light on the work of Gilad Atzmon, who uses his music as a vehicle for peacebuilding amongst the Arab and Israeli communities. He fuses elements of each culture to create something new and encourage listeners to see the possibilities of unification. In Chapter 8, George Kent displays 'unpeaceful music'-- "when music is used to repel rather than attract" (Kent 2007). In regards to education, I think the most useful kind of unpeaceful music to examine is nationalistic music, as this is relevant to our students (and a more covert type of unpeaceful music), which can relate to systemic prejudices some of our students may carry, and therefore, lead to a transformation of values.

This project functions as a month-long unit, culminating in a 'Cultural Night' Celebration. This idea was extrapolated from prior ideas and discussions held within a "Peacebuilding through Music" course. This unit is entirely student-centric, starting with student-led indigenous culture interviews and sharing cultural musical findings with the class, moving towards students working in mixed groups to engage in musicking with musical traditions of their classmates. There are three parts to the project, which will serve as the culmination of the unit:

Part 1- In semi-homogeneous groups, students create a PowerPoint presentation incorporating each group member's culture. Each of the 4 groups, as a whole, represent a broader demographic which serves as an umbrella title encompassing each person's individual culture. Students take this opportunity to learn from each other and compile cultural facts, traditions, and a musical excerpt into a short presentation.

Part 2- Each group provides a musical performance of a culture that is foreign to them. This performance is taught by the group from which this performance's origins derived. This could be a song, a song-game, a dance, etc.

Part 3- The entire class, at the end of the unit, collaborates to create an original song using elements taken from each culture they've learned about. At the end of the night, they premiere their piece, together.

# Pat-Med Cultural Celebration

## Narrative of Purpose

Our Intercultural Unit, culminating with a night of cultural performance, activities, and food, is intended to serve as an educational, collaborative, and inclusive musical journey which reflects the cultures and traditions of our very own community. As a diverse district, it is imperative that we not only acknowledge, but celebrate the rich traditions that surround us. In efforts to transcend barriers that divide, this unit sets out to reshape the way students interact with cultural identity by posing conversations and musical experiences around the following questions: How do I view myself? How do I view others? How do others view me? What makes us different, what do we have in common, what do I like about others and what do they like about me? What traditions and values do we share? These experiences lead way to vulnerable, empathetic collaboration in which all parties feel acknowledged, celebrated, valued, and connected. Through collaborative, intercultural musicking, peace is possible!

### *Cultural Night Celebration*

The fruits of our studies throughout the unit culminate in a night of song, dance, interaction, and food that is reflective of the cultures throughout our community. Students, faculty, friends, and family are welcome to partake in the night's activities.

**Group 1** represents _____

**Group 2** represents _____

**Group 3** represents _____

**Group 4** represents _____

*Groups of students are determined by regions of cultural origin. Students with cultures that are regionally close in proximity are grouped together, with each student having an opportunity to share their specific cultural identity. The song/dance/song-game that is taught and performed is chosen collectively and democratically by the individuals within

the group. Each individual student is given a chance to talk about their own culture and perform a work from a culture outside of their own.

| Time | Activity | Why? |
|---|---|---|
| 0:00 – 0:10 | **Introduction**<br>Students greet guests as they walk in, handing out student-made programs and directing guests to sample some cultural delicacies brought in my participating families of students. Students, faculty, and guests mingle as they eat and find way to their seats. I share the *Narrative of Purpose* with the audience as students prepare to begin their presentations. | • To foster a welcoming, inclusive environment<br>• To foster communication across students, family, and staff |
| 0:10 – 0:20 | **Group 1 Presentation**<br>A group of 4-5 students representing one culture presents a PowerPoint providing background on their culture and musical traditions. Students invite Group 3 up for a performance of a musical tradition from Group 1's culture (Group 1 has taught Group 3). | • To engender pride in one's identity<br>• To engender vulnerable, empathetic conversations around one's identity<br>• To teach one's own culture and authentically learn about a different culture. |
| 0:20 – 0:30 | **Group 2 Presentation**<br>A group of 4-5 students representing one culture presents a PowerPoint providing background on their culture and musical traditions. Students invite Group 4 up for a performance of a musical tradition from Group 2's culture<br>(Group 2 has taught Group 4) | • To engender pride in one's identity<br>• To engender vulnerable, empathetic conversations around one's identity<br>• To teach one's own culture and authentically learn about a different culture. |
| 0:30 – 0:40 | **Audience Workshop**<br>Students from all 4 groups work together to teach the audience one of the songs/dances/song-games performed by the previous groups. Depending on audience size and willingness of students, this can be done in smaller groups or as one cohesive unit | • To foster collaboration between students<br>• To foster leadership and communication skills<br>• To engage audience musically and spark connections between participants |
| 0:40 – 0:50 | **Group 3 Presentation**<br>A group of 4-5 students representing one culture presents a PowerPoint providing background on their culture and musical traditions. Students invite Group 1 up for a performance of a musical tradition from Group 3's culture<br>(Group 3 has taught Group 1) | • To engender pride in one's identity<br>• To engender vulnerable, empathetic conversations around one's identity<br>• To teach one's own culture and authentically learn about a different culture. |
| 0: 50 – 0:60 | **Group 4 Presentation**<br>A group of 4-5 students representing one culture present a PowerPoint providing background on their culture and musical traditions. Students invite Group 2 up for a performance of a musical tradition from Group 4's culture<br>(Group 4 has taught Group 2) | • To engender pride in one's identity<br>• To engender vulnerable, empathetic conversations around one's identity<br>• To teach one's own culture and authentically learn about a different culture. |
| 0: 60 – 0:65 | **Closing Performance**<br>All students perform a 'Peace Song' in which they've collaborated to compose, incorporating elements from each culture within the classroom. | • To foster collaborative, peaceful, democratic, inclusive decision making<br>• To enable empathy through musicking<br>• To promote peace through exemplary collaboration and coalescence |

# The Build Up - Activities for Peace

Before this type of event is possible, many activities need to take place for students to successfully share such a vulnerable experience.

This begins with establishing a safe, welcoming environment from the very start of the unit (essentially, the beginning of the year-- but especially at the start of this unit). In order to successfully do this, we must not erase or refuse to acknowledge the differences between students in the room. Oftentimes, this is handled outside of classroom walls and not in a constructive, safe way.  The following activities are examples of ways in which cultural identity can be acknowledged, and therefore, safely and positively worked with throughout the course of the unit:

| Activity | Description | This creates a safe environment by: |
|---|---|---|
| Cross The Line (**Week 1** Day 1 – Activity, Reflection Day 2-- Discussion, Response Two 45 min class periods) | Students stand on one side the classroom, demarcated by a line of masking tape. Students are prompted to note whatever feelings arise during the activity, and to only participate to the extent with which they feel comfortable. Students are posed with statements regarding identity, prejudice, bullying, cultural background, family life, etc. Students cross the line if they can identify with the statements being made. Next class, students quietly individually reflect on the activity, then share with a partner. Individuals share with the class and together, with the teacher, identify and discuss at length the commonalities of experience along with prominent differences between students. | • Allowing students to express their personal identity<br>• Empathize with others who have 'crossed the line' for the same things, or for different things<br>• Bring to light and acknowledge the different identities (cultural, social, gender, etc.)<br>• Create a welcoming atmosphere where all identities are valued |
| Interview (**Week 2** Three 45 min class periods) | Students interview familial elders on cultural musical traditions. Students share findings with the class and are asked to find similarities between cultures. Students, in addition, share a musical recording of their own culture. | • Allowing students to share parts of themselves<br>• Allowing students to find common cultural ground between them and others |
| MWB Machine Activity (**Week 3 - Day 1** One 45 min class period) | Students are instructed to 'build a machine' collaboratively through physical movements and sound. The object the machine is building is at first, chosen by the teacher. After one round, a student may suggest an object to build. | • Now that students are aware of their differences, this gives them an opportunity to collaborate in a low-risk, silly environment<br>• Providing means for students to connect with each other through humor and teamwork<br>• Providing means for empathetic, kind discussion in which students can question others on their choices without fear of retaliation. |
| Musical Show and Tell (**Week 3 – Day 2&3** | *Scaffolded from the previous activity. Select students bring in a family antique or heirloom. They show it to the class; class guesses what it is, what it does, where it came from. Students repeat the Machine Activity, but this time | • Providing means for cultural expression and exposure<br>• Deepening interpersonal connections between students |

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|---|---|---|
| Two 45 min class periods) | they are building the student's antique. After it is 'built,' student will reveal the actual item and provide background. | • Allowing students to feel more comfortable taking up literal and figurative space alongside others.<br>• Promoting coexistence & coalescence |
| MWB Listen & Respond Activity (**Week 4** Two 45 min class period) | Students bring back their interview songs for this assignment—in pairs, one student plays their song while the other responds by drawing a picture that represents what they hear. Students flip roles, and then discuss the creative choices made in their paintings. Students partake in 4 'rounds' total of listening and responding. | • Utilizes and promotes active listening<br>• Promotes analysis of sound<br>• Allows for different and multiple modes of expression<br>• Promotes synthesis of art forms |
| Cultural Song Share (**Week 5** Day 1 – Research, Day 2 – Learning, Day 3 – Teaching Three 45 min class periods) | Based on answers from the interview assignment, students with similar cultures form groups research cultural songs, song-games, or dances that coincide a song. Students share with class and class polls which songs they know and do not know. From there, group chooses one song they feel comfortable learning. Once each group has learned their song/song-game/ or dance, they teach it to another group. | • Providing room for discussion amongst students of similar cultures, as well as students of different cultures<br>• Ownership of one's culture, and showing respect towards one's culture and other's culture<br>• Giving opportunities for students to authentically teach their own culture |
| Class Song for Peace (**Week 5** – Development & Creation **Week 6** – Performance Practice Five 45 min class periods) | After exposure to elements from cultures reflected in the classroom, students identify prominent features from each one. Then, students create a song for peace by incorporating prominent language, rhythmic motives, and instruments from all the cultures they've learned about. | • Providing room for democratic, empathetic discussion<br>• Promoting collaboration which encompasses and reflects cultures from every student in the room |

## Video Examples

- **Cross the Line Activity** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFUQV5aWTxk
- **Example of easy song-game for students to teach audience (if this culture is reflected in the demographic)** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCQsvt4AiSI

## Summary

Building peace within ourselves, our schools, and our communities is possible-- though not the easiest feat. Teaching our students to be vulnerable, open, empathetic listeners is essential in building peace. We must be models for our students by continuously being vulnerable, open, and empathetic listeners, ourselves. This project allows for the students of our classroom to take the floor in owning their own identity, teaching others about their cultural backgrounds, musicking together to create new identities and relationships between each other and creating a climate of peace within their school. This project serves is exemplary of what can happen if every student and teacher were to assume responsibility in peacebuilding.

# References

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