UNDERSTANDING MUSIC CROSS-CULTURALLY: A PHILOSOPHICAL EXAMINATION

by

RENATE ANDREA RUTH ZENKER

B.Mus., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1990
B.Mus.Ed., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1990
B.A., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991
M.A., University of British Columbia, 1994

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 2000

© Renate Andrea Ruth Zenker, 2000
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of  CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date  SEPTEMBER 28, 2000
Abstract

This dissertation presents a philosophical examination of an important question in music education: What does it mean to understand the music of our own culture or the music of another culture? It begins with a conceptual analysis of understanding, an analysis that reveals understanding has many different senses and that it involves a multidimensional range of considerations. The work presents an overview, summary, and analysis of various arguments, from both the Western and cross-cultural perspective, concerning what understanding music means. The literature and the arguments from the cross-cultural perspective are situated in the important debate of whether there are generic musical characteristics that can help us understand the music of non-Western cultures, characteristics shared by Western music, or if we can only understand the music of each culture based in the study of that culture. I argue that there has been an artificial "gap" created between understanding Western art music and understanding the music of other cultures. Based on my analysis of understanding, and the issues raised by the literature, I present a multidimensional and interrelated set of factors involved in understanding music cross-culturally. These factors are: elements (including expressive elements), concepts, terminology, internal/external musical context/structure, culture, listening, hearing, performing, and personal experiences, among others. This range of considerations is
supported by philosophical literature on the general nature of understanding and attempts to resolve the tension between understanding music through generic concepts and understanding music through culture. The important point of the multidimensional nature of understanding for music education is that levels of sophistication of understanding are suggested and that moving from a less sophisticated to a more sophisticated level of understanding music should be a major aim of music education. Finally, I consider the educational implications of my range of considerations. Teaching for understanding music cross-culturally involves both "top down" (teaching music through concepts) and "bottom up" (teaching music through culture) approaches. It also includes all the ways in which we engage ourselves with music: listening, performing, composing, improvising, and reading.
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................ ii
Table of Contents ................................................................. iv
Acknowledgement ............................................................... vi
Dedication ......................................................................... vii
Chapter 1 An Analysis of Understanding ....................... 1
  Introduction and Research Purpose ......................... 1
  Current Musical Environment .............................. 4
  An Analysis of Understanding .............................. 6
    Understanding has different senses .................. 6
    Understanding, comprehending, and appreciating ... 10
    Task achievement analysis:
      Understanding is an upshot, not an activity ........ 11
  Summary .................................................................. 14
  The Cross-Cultural Debates ................................ 15
Chapter Outline ................................................................. 17

Chapter 2 Overview of the Perspectives on Understanding Music .......................... 20
  Introduction ................................................................. 20
  Western Art Music Perspective ....................... 22
  Cross-cultural Perspective ............................. 30
    Universal generic view ................................. 30
    Cultural specific view .................................. 34
    The cultural reconcilers ......................... 38
  Summary and Research Questions ..................... 42

Chapter 3 Understanding Music: The Questions, Issues, and Problems .................. 45
  Introduction ................................................................. 45
  Western Art Music Perspective ....................... 47
  Cross-cultural Perspective ............................. 52
    Argument against Western "musical beliefs" ... 54
    Argument against Western art music concepts ... 56
    Argument against Western aesthetics and aesthetic language .... 58
  Other arguments ...................................................... 62
  Summary .................................................................. 66
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4</th>
<th>Examination of the Perspectives on Understanding Music</th>
<th>70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Art Music Perspective</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical elements</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal and external understanding</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can we understand music without concepts?</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding music: Expression, emotions, and &quot;being moved&quot;</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of understanding</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural Perspective</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument against Western beliefs</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument against Western art music concepts</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument against Western aesthetics and aesthetic language</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gap and the Bridge: Towards Generic Concepts</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5</th>
<th>Range of Factors Involved in Understanding Music Cross-culturally</th>
<th>110</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Aspects</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, Audiating, and Hearing</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Conceptual Apparatus Continuum</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and Appreciation</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Factors Involved in Understanding Music Cross-culturally</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6</th>
<th>Educational Implications, Conclusions, and Areas for Continuing Research Based Upon My Conception of Understanding Music Cross-culturally</th>
<th>139</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Implications</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas for Continuing Research</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Bibliography | 147 |
Acknowledgement

Thank you to all those people, both near and far, who helped me on my long and difficult journey. I am especially grateful to those people who took my first steps with me and stayed by my side until I happily reached my destination.
For my father who is always with me in spirit and who shares this accomplishment with me.
Chapter 1

An Analysis of Understanding

Introduction and Research Purpose

There are many aspects of music education that require a firmer conceptual basis for their implementation in school systems, especially since the necessity of music education itself has been questioned throughout the history of education in Canada. At the time of writing this dissertation, as it has been in the past, music education in the public school system is "under siege." It is often perceived as an educational "frill," an extra-curricular activity, and as a subject to occupy students while their classroom teachers prepare to teach other subjects.

I believe music education is in a state of crisis, in part, because of limited and inconsistent research in the music education literature concerning what it means to "understand" the music of our own culture or the music of another culture. There are two reasons why the nature of understanding music cross-culturally is very important for music education. The first reason, is that educators, school boards, and parents may be unaware of the educational value of teaching for a range of interrelated factors that I will argue are involved in understanding music cross-culturally. The second reason, is that music educators may be uncertain how to respond to the multicultural classroom and how to teach music in this cross-
cultural environment. Students from various cultures come from different backgrounds and may have been exposed to music other than Western art music, popular music, rock and roll, country, or jazz. Although, as in the past, there is an ever increasing interest in the music of other cultures outside of the West or "world music," teachers may be unfamiliar with these musics and how to teach them. Teachers may be confused as to how to teach the music of other cultures because they may not know what is involved in understanding these musics compared with understanding their own music.

To help rectify this situation, and to contribute to the discourse on understanding music, the purpose of this dissertation is to undertake a philosophical examination of the current uses, presuppositions, ambiguities, and implications of the concept of "understanding" music from both the Western art music and the cross-cultural music perspectives, and to come to some conclusion about what is involved in understanding music cross-culturally. The research questions I will address are raised by the literature written from those two perspectives. I present an overview of the literature and outline the questions I will address in the next chapter.

By choosing the topic of understanding music I have accepted several challenges:

1. Understanding, in the first instance, is a crucial topic in education, but a difficult one to analyze and discuss, in
great part due to the ambiguous nature of understanding.

2. Although it is an extremely important topic, there has been relatively little focus on understanding in the literature on music education (Gouzouasis, 1998).

3. There are so many types and genres of music in the world that to discuss understanding "music" as a subject is a vast topic.

4. I have chosen to situate much of the discussion of understanding music in the debate about whether there can be a universal understanding of music based in generic music concepts, or only a particularist understanding based in the study of a particular culture.

5. The nature of music and understanding music is extremely complex and, at times, difficult to put into words.

6. Finally, any one of the problem areas I have listed herein is sufficient for a thesis topic in and of itself.

As bases for my analysis of understanding music, in this chapter, I present my perception of the current musical environment of students, my analysis of "understanding," and my interpretation of the cross-cultural debate in music education concerning what it means to understand music of different cultures.
Current Musical Environment

Any questions regarding the necessity or importance of music education must be considered within the experience of the average student in their "world of music," and must recognize the complexity of that world for what it is. The examples of musical experiences I provide, are based on my work teaching piano privately to school-age students (ages 5-16) and my observations of them, as well as the musical experiences they have described to me. Children who may have begun in pre-school and kindergarten to sing such typical children's songs as "Twinkle, Twinkle" and "Mary Had a Little Lamb," are also exposed to the genres of music to which their parents listen.¹ The young child may experience country and western music, popular, rock and roll, jazz or "classical" music, and music from their parents' country of ethnic origin. Through mass media, a young child may hear different types of "classical" music or "ethnic" music and may not know exactly what they are hearing, be it Mozart's "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" or drummers from Zimbabwe. A child may take piano lessons and play "classical" music and jazz but never hear either type of music at home. Also the child may not hear any live performances in which a concert pianist plays Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata or a jazz pianist plays "Take the 'A' Train." A saxophone student may learn to play "Ode to Joy," as does every

¹ See for example May's (1984) study which demonstrates that primary-age school children have musical style preferences, the implication being that they developed these preferences before they entered the public school system.
beginning band student, and have never heard of Beethoven. Most students know the tune to "Für Elise" and "Pachelbel'sCanon," but may not realize their origin. Many students learn to play the ukulele, recorder, and Orff instruments, sing in choirs, play in school bands and string programs, and participate in a six-week course module on African drumming. Students may experience many types of music outside the classroom, and music appears to be an important part of the everyday social and cultural lives of young people. In the diverse and complex "world of music" that currently surrounds students, I believe that it is important that "understanding" should be a significant purpose of music education. Music plays such an important part in all our lives, students should understand the music that they hear around them, so that they can make informed choices and judgements about it, and give reasons for their choices, rather than just expressing like or dislike.

Because in education we strive to teach for understanding (Peters, 1966), in the present work, I operate on the belief that it is crucial to music education to untangle the divergent opinions on understanding music, especially the cross-cultural understanding of music. We need to find the roots of understanding music, and point to a more cohesive and useful direction of study for music education.
An Analysis of Understanding

Understanding has different senses

One of the difficulties in examining what the term "understanding" means is that it exists in different grammatical forms which result in various uses of the word.² "To understand" can be a transitive verb which has as an object both things and people, for example, "I understand car engines," "I understand my sister well," and "I understand symphonic structure." As an intransitive verb, we can simply say "I understand," without referring to a particular person or thing. "Understanding" is also a noun, for example, "He does not possess sufficient understanding to carry out the task," as well as an adjective, for example, "She is an understanding person." "To understand" can also be followed by an indirect question; as Martin (1970) points out one can understand what a person is saying, or understand that a person is lying, or understand why a person is saying something or understand how a person knows what s/he is saying. Martin explains:

That is to say, it may be the case that relative to some particular context one is only said to understand a thing X if one understands X in terms of a particular indirect question, for example, "what function X serves" or "why X occurred" or "how X works." Thus

² It is important to recognize the ambiguous nature of "understanding" for all types of music research. For example, an empirical study assessing understanding music may be assessing either one aspect of understanding music or multiple aspects of understanding music.
for example, a student in a sociology course may be said to understand a given institution, for example, the public school, only if he understands what function it serves in society; an apprentice watchmaker may be said to understand a watch only if he understands what makes it tick; and a child at his first baseball game may be said to understand the game only if he understands how to play it. (p.151)

This discussion of understanding concerning why, how, what, and that is what makes the statement "I understand X" more complicated than originally thought. Different types of understanding of the same thing or same group of things are possible, and this understanding varies also according to context.

There are, it seems to me, six paradigm uses of understanding:

1. The general comprehension use means "to comprehend; to apprehend the meaning or import of; to grasp the idea of" (Oxford, 1989, p. 984). This sense of understanding implies the recognition of the character and constituent parts of something, for example, "I understand the school system," and "I understand the parts of a song." This sense includes discrimination between two things or among a group of things, for example, "I understand that you are coming to the party, but John is not," and "I understand the differences between an oboe and a clarinet."

2. The language use has as its objects words, sentences, or signs. In this sense, to understand means to grasp or "get a handle on" the meaning of something as in "to apprehend the meaning or idea by knowing what is conveyed by the words or signs
used: [understand] Russian, [understand] a message in code, [understand] a wink" (Webster's, 1976, p. 2490). If we consider Western music notation to be a type of written language made up of signs, or consider the tonal syllables "do, re, mi...," we can consider this sense of understanding in understanding music.

3. The task use of understanding answers the question of how to do something such as a task or job. This sense of understanding means having knowledge in the practice of something, being able to carry out a task or a skill. This use of understanding would apply to the child understanding how to play baseball, as in Martin’s example above, or somebody understanding how to fix a car, or understanding how to write all the inversions of a dominant seventh chord.

4. The personal character use of understanding is "to apprehend clearly the character or nature of (a person)" (Oxford, 1989, p. 984). When we say that we understand a person we cannot mean that we simply recognize a person, but mean that we are aware intimately of what another person is like so that we understand why that person acts in certain ways. In other words, we know the person’s character. For example, "We better understand Beethoven’s music when we understand Beethoven."

5. The empathetic use of understanding is defined as "to show a sympathetic or tolerant or indulgent attitude toward something" (Webster’s, 1976, p. 2490), for example, "Helen is an understanding person." This use of understanding assumes the
necessity of personal experience, a delicacy of perception and being critically, sensitively, and emotionally aware of subtleties. This use of understand stems from the doctrine of "Verstehen" (Martin, 1970). The thrust of this doctrine is that by putting ourselves in another person's position, or having been in the same position ourselves, we come to know their way of living, acting, behaving, and we can come to see things or feel as the other person does.³

6. The interpretation use of the term understanding, involves investigation, categorization, and an examination of the deeper meaning of something. It is "to regard in a particular way or with a particular meaning in mind; interpret in a single one of a number of possible ways; the power to make experience intelligible by bringing perceived particulars under appropriate concepts; the capacity to formulate and apply to experience concepts and categories, to judge, and to draw logical inferences" (Webster's, 1976, p. 2490). This sense presupposes some knowledge base in that we cannot regard in a particular way, interpret, achieve mental grasp of the causal/nature of something unless we have the appropriate information. An example of this type of understanding would be of a very specific nature such as:

³ Scruton (1983, p. 94-99) provides an interesting discussion of the possibility of some type of empathy being involved in understanding the expressive elements of music. However, I will not follow this line of argument.
"Do you understand why this music composition is an excellent example of the Romantic period?" This type of understanding involves knowledge of what previous categories are.

It seems clear that there are many different senses of understanding and that all of them are applicable in a music context, with perhaps the exception of sense five, the empathetic sense.

Understanding, comprehending, and appreciating

As it is so aptly pointed out and described in Webster's Dictionary (1976), understanding is closely related to the notions of comprehending and appreciating.

UNDERSTAND and COMPREHEND are very often interchangeable. UNDERSTAND is wider in its use, ranging from mere physical act of sensory perception or very casual consideration to a full and profound realization of inner nature, rationale or significance. COMPREHEND may focus attention on thought processes rather than their conclusions. COMPREHEND may stand between sense or feel and understand in suggesting less reflection and analysis than the latter. APPRECIATION stresses full and just perception, especially of value, arrived at with insight and discrimination. (p. 3490)

This definition makes clear that understanding and comprehending are used interchangeably in contexts such as in the general comprehension use above. As I explain below, understanding itself is not an activity, but happens as a result of activities or processes, as I would argue comprehending does. Just as we cannot say "I was understanding for five minutes," we
also cannot say "I was comprehending for five minutes." Mental processes involved in comprehending, which are the focus of psychological research, are certainly necessary for understanding. However, beyond the level at which understanding is associated with comprehending, understanding may be more sophisticated and involve more considerations than comprehension. Appreciating, which I discuss in greater detail in chapter 5, has understanding as its basis. It moves beyond understanding, however, in that it involves the estimation of value when the object of our understanding is something to which we usually ascribe value such as literature, music, and visual art.

**Task-achievement analysis: Understanding is an upshot, not an activity**

In this section I will show that understanding is something which happens to us—provided that we have been appropriately prepared.

When we attempt to organize and classify educational terms such as teach, learn, train, understand, appreciate and even educate itself, we are dealing with interesting philosophical problems in Rylean task-achievement analysis (1959). Educational terms tend to be very difficult to classify clearly as they are most often ambiguous and their assigned classifications often overlap in ways which seems confusing due to the terminology used. It is important, however, to look at how this type of
analysis functions and analyze various educational terms as a backdrop for the classification of the term understanding.

Basic task-achievement analysis is rooted in Ryle’s (1959) distinction between verbs which express actions or tasks (e.g., racing, hunting, reasoning, listening) and those verbs which pair with them and express the outcomes or upshots of these actions or tasks (e.g., winning, finding, concluding, hearing, respectively), which Ryle calls achievement concepts. Ryle’s main point is that certain words represent the successful outcome of the tasks in question and are not tasks in themselves. For example, winning the race, is not a task in itself but is the result of running the race. White (1967) distinguishes a subset of action verbs in which the action consists centrally of paying attention to something (listening, watching, looking). The verbs which pick out the upshots of attention verbs are what White called "reception" verbs (hearing, noticing, seeing). White explains, "What we receive, comes to us provided we have been appropriately prepared. We do not produce it or gain it, secure it or bring it off" (p.69), and "to be struck by something in the sense of noticing ... is to receive knowledge of it, to be able to tell what it is" (p.70).

Some terms, however, are special cases of Rylean task and achievement words in one or both of the following instances. Firstly, there is not a clear one to one correlation between the task word and the achievement word. While we can easily match the
achievement word "find" with the task word, "seek," there are clearly many task words associated with the achievement word "education." Secondly, in normal language usage, some task and achievement words, such as teach and educate respectively, according to Scheffler (1965), have both "intentional" and "success" uses. As an example of the intentional use, as a teacher I can intend to teach a particular concept, but cannot guarantee that it will be learned. The success sense, is used in the past tense. For example, Johnny was taught to sing in tune and move to a steady beat means that Johnny did indeed learn what was taught. We may use "education," to refer to what activities we intend to do in teaching or instructing or to refer to what we want to succeed in developing: the "educated person."

Understanding falls into yet another special category of achievement words, which I label multi-faceted reception concepts and which Scheffler (1966) calls "attainments." According to Scheffler, some educational terms, such as "appreciate" and "understand" outstrip very general uses and definitions of "to believe, know, learn, and teach," and are difficult to classify and define. These attainments have an element of Ryle's achievements in that they are upshots rather than activities and have an element of White's reception concepts in that they happen to us provided we have been appropriately prepared. They move beyond achievements and reception concepts in that they do not have strictly associated single techniques or tasks, but groups
or sets of techniques or tasks.

As with other reception concepts, understanding, as we use the word in normal language usage, is not something in which you can engage. It is something which may happen to you when you have thought, studied or completed various tasks. There is not one single technique or task associated with understanding, but sets or groups of techniques or tasks depending on what the object of the understanding is. However, as Daniels (1986, p. 281) points out, "Sometimes it [understanding] simply happens without effort and without difficulty."

Summary

For the purpose of my investigation of understanding music, the most appropriate use of the term "understanding" is that which refers to an upshot involving a multi-dimensional range of considerations. My focus on the multidimensional nature of understanding is crucial to sorting out the arguments which equate understanding music with only one task or consideration. I return to consider the various uses, synonyms, and arguments for the multidimensional nature of understanding at appropriate points throughout this work.

---

See for example, Elliott's claim (1995, p. 68) that "musicianship equal musical understanding" or Walker's claim (1993, p. 13) that we must understand music through understanding culture first rather than through any sort of universal musical sounds.

14
The Cross-cultural Debates

Since I am addressing the cross-cultural understanding of music in this thesis, I had to consider arguments concerning not only what constitutes understanding Western art music but also the music of other cultures. At the root of the discussion of understanding the music of other cultures is the question of whether the ways we approach understanding Western art music are similar or useful to understanding the music of other cultures, and hence whether we can understand Western art music and the music of other cultures in a similar fashion. There are two arguments of central relevance in my thesis, related to this question, which I shall call the universal generic concepts argument and the relative cultural specific argument.

The universal generic concepts argument (Elliott, 1995, 1996; Swanwick, 1988b, 1999), posits that the music of each different culture has its own particular characteristics, but that all music is united by certain universal characteristics. These characteristics allow us to develop universal generic concepts which we can use to understand the music of most cultures. The characteristics proposed by universalism are; music has a life of its own; all people respond to music as part of a Gestalt acquired in their culture; in the global village most musics are being influenced by each other; all cultures create music and the culture gives the music its meaning; music is experienced in all cultures as heightening experience or giving
spiritual meaning; all musics have standards of goodness (aesthetic criteria). This argument also considers such universal concepts as how particular pieces of music begin and end, how it moves ahead in time, how it builds to a climax, and how it provides tension and release.

According to the relative cultural specific argument (Fiske, 1993; Walker, 1990, 1996a, 1996b), Western music is but one form that music can take and has no relationship to the music of other cultures. This argument is sometimes used to counter "cultural colonialism" (we assume that all cultures compose, perform and listen to music exactly as we do in the West) and "cultural intrusion" (we intrude on other cultures by trying to understand their music whether through multiculturalism or ethnomusicology) (Reimer 1994). According to this argument, Western concepts of music cannot be extended to music of other cultures and therefore Western constructs about music cannot apply to other cultures. Analyzing the music of other cultures in a Western manner is not suitable to the role music plays in those cultures. This argument can also contain an ethical argument holding that we cannot fit other musics into Western paradigms without insulting and destroying their integrity. The weak form of the argument is that since music differs from culture to culture, we must situate it in its cultural context and learn about those elements of that culture which are important to understanding its music. The strong form of the argument is that music is such an intrinsic
part of a particular culture that unless we are willing to study the general nature of the culture as a whole and then look at how music plays its role in this cultural context, we cannot understand the music. The extreme form of this argument is that we cannot study the music of a particular culture at all and that we should not investigate musics of other cultures; we cannot possibly understand the cultures of other peoples, let alone their "music," since we have not lived the lives of people of other cultures and cannot "get into" their world, their history, social structure, religious beliefs or spirituality, customs, work habits, physical surroundings, etc. and therefore cannot understand the context (cultural or otherwise) for their music.

I return to this cross-cultural debate in chapters 2, 3, and 4, as I outline below.

Chapter Outline

In chapter 2, I provide an overview of various authors' perspectives on understanding music. I describe the authors' theories on understanding in the terminology that they use, such as "concept," "elements," and "aesthetics," and in ensuing chapters I examine the terminology that they use. The literature reviewed is not only about understanding Western art music but also about understanding the music of other cultures. I have divided the literature selected for the cross-cultural perspective into three categories: universal generic concepts
view, relative cultural specific view and cultural reconcilers.

Chapter 3 sets out the questions issues and problems raised by the literature so that in chapter 4, I can examine them in greater detail. In the section "Western Art Music Perspective," authors writing from the Western art music perspective raise the question of the importance of music elements, concepts, and music vocabulary in relation to understanding music. They are also concerned with understanding how a piece of music is put together, the relationship among music concepts, expression and emotion in music, levels of sophistication of understanding music and understanding music through a broader human context or culture.

The questions raised in the section "Cross-cultural Perspective" focus on the arguments at the root of much of the literature on understanding music cross-culturally. These arguments, which shift the focus of understanding music, to understanding culture, are based in the supposed "inapplicability" of any notion of Western music understanding to the music of other cultures. Thus the sections "Argument against Western musical beliefs," "Argument against Western art music concepts," and "Arguments against Western aesthetics and aesthetic language argument," outline the types of arguments made in the literature against the applicability of any aspect of the Western approach to music to understanding music cross-culturally.
Chapter 4 mirrors the order of chapter 3. It lays the groundwork for the range of considerations for understanding music cross-culturally presented in chapter 5. The analysis centres on concepts and elements, expression and emotion, levels and modes of understanding and introduces the notion of internal and external understanding. I contend that the arguments for the exclusion of the various ways we approach understanding Western art music from understanding music of other cultures, are based on indefensible conceptual arguments. I argue that there has been an artificial gap created between understanding Western art music and understanding music cross-culturally, based in an artificial separation of Western art music from other types of music.

Chapter 5 introduces several important considerations which had previously not been discussed, at least not in any great detail: cultural aspects, performance, listening, hearing and audiating, our conceptual apparatus continuum, and the related concept of appreciation. It also presents a multidimensional, interrelated range of considerations for understanding music cross-culturally, based on the previous chapters, which includes: elements (including expressive elements), concepts, terminology, internal/external musical context/structure, cultural context, listening, hearing, performing, and personal experiences.

In chapter 6, I present the educational implications and conclusions based upon my conception of understanding music cross-culturally, and suggest some areas for further research.
Chapter 2

Overview of the Perspectives on Understanding Music

Introduction

Below I provide an overview of selected sources primarily from the philosophy of music and the philosophy of music education literature. The purpose of this chapter is to present to the reader the types of arguments and interpretations of what understanding music means from two main perspectives: the Western art music perspective and the cross-cultural perspective. The literature search rationale was confined to a search for articles in either periodicals or complete chapters in books that are devoted to the conceptual nature of understanding in music and music education. This criterion of research of a conceptual nature was chosen because I wish to investigate various writers' conceptualizations of understanding, not how these conceptualizations are implemented in the classroom by teachers, or how they can be tested in the classroom through empirical study. Each review consists of a summary of the main points and arguments made by the author. My aim herein is to discover how researchers' conceptions of understanding music differ so that I can later assess the adequacy of the formulation of their arguments. At the end of the chapter I present the specific research questions I will address.

The first section of the chapter, "The Western Art Music
Perspective" contains reviews of sources which explicitly or inexplicitly discuss understanding Western art music. Although we can consider many genres of music to be "Western," such as jazz, popular music, and blues, these sources focus on the Western "art" music tradition which, as a body of music, is known as "classical" music. This literature discusses different considerations important to understanding music, such as elements, concepts, expression, intellectualism, articulation and culture.

As I outlined in chapter 1, the literature in the second section "Cross-Cultural Perspective," is located in the important debate between those who promote understanding music through the universal or generic view versus those who hold a relativistic cultural specific view of music and music education. The former position advocates the use of universal generic concepts to study the music of other cultures. The latter position argues that music from each culture can only be viewed according to the approach that a particular culture takes to its music and that there are no generic music concepts which help us understand music from different cultures. There is a third position, which I call the "cultural reconcilers," that attempts to reconcile the previous two positions.
Western Art Music Perspective

Ridley (1993) argues that the most rudimentary sense of understanding involves being able to hear sounds not just as sounds, but as music, rather than some random noise or racket. The difference lies in how we perceive sounds as sounds and how we perceive sounds as music.

For the experience of hearing music is not the same as the experience of hearing sounds. Rather in each case those who understand what they are hearing, hear the sounds as a melody, or as a rhythm, so that their understanding is a way of hearing certain successions and clusters of pitches and unpitched sounds as tones, rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and so forth. To understand music (in this rudimentary sense) is to be able to have experiences of this kind- is, in other words, to be able to hear the music in a certain way. (p. 590)

He argues that these perceptual properties of sounds such as melody and rhythm, vary from work to work and the ability to experience them rests with the experiences and abilities of the listener. The listener has to adjust to each different kind of music, from medieval monody to Mozart, because the melody in each of these types of music is not identical, although nobody would doubt that they are melodies. The listener, beyond being able to perceive sound as music, must have various expectations about the music beyond these basic perceptions of melody, harmony and rhythm. He goes on to argue that understanding the "purely musical," i.e., the structural aspects of the music, is inseparable from understanding the expressive elements of the
music. Moreover Ridley believes that it is impossible to listen to the structural elements of a piece of music without grasping at least some of the expressive elements.

Davies (1994b) argues, giving extensive musical examples to substantiate his thesis, that knowing how the music is put together is not sufficient to understand it. Rather, to understand a piece of music, we must also know why it is put together as it is, what its subtle differences are compared to other works of its kind, and must have some understanding of the genius of its composer. According to Davies, understanding music is hard work not to be equated with simple pleasure. When discussing how a listener comes to understand a piece of music he writes:

She needs to ask not just "how are these works put together?" but "why are they put together as they are?" This latter question, asked as one about function involves a consideration of how the particular work differs from others of its kind, and in turn requires a grasp of what it is that distinguishes one musical kind from another...If the work is a concerto, knowing how it is put together will tell her next to nothing about whether it succeeds as a concerto unless she has some idea of what concertos are supposed to be for and what difficulties are presented to the composer in meeting that function within the broad confines of a sonata form framework. (p. 70)

Davies (1994a) emphasizes the important role that the historical and stylistic location of a particular work plays in understanding the work.

Scruton (1983) explores understanding music through a kind
of understanding he calls "intentional understanding." This type of understanding rests in how objects appear to us, and that in the case of music, means how we listen to music. This type of understanding, as opposed to scientific understanding, which "seeks to uncover the causal connections which underlie and explain experiences" (p.78), relies on the concepts that humans use to perceive the world. In music the most basic concepts are movement, tones, rhythm, and harmony. He thus defines musical understanding as:

"...a special case of intentional understanding. How we hear music clearly depends upon our intellectual capacities and education, upon concepts, analogies and expectations that we have inherited from a culture steeped in musical expression. Yet the understanding that we derive from this culture is manifest in our way of hearing, and not just in our way of thinking about music. I shall suggest that the ways of hearing sounds that we consider to be ways of hearing music, are based in concepts extended by metaphorical transference." (p.78-79)

He then proceeds to show, through musical examples, how we hear certain tones, harmonies or rhythms differently depending on their context in a music score. For Scruton (1983), our experience of the music does not stop there:

Moreover, what we experience in hearing harmony is something that has to be described in metaphorical terms. Chords are heard as 'spaced', 'open', 'filled', 'hollow' (to use the basic metaphors of musical experience).... Just as melody involves the

---

3 See Scruton's (1987) article for an abbreviated explanation of his theory of intentional understanding in music.
metaphorical transference of ideas of 'movement', 'space', 'height' and 'depth', so does harmony involve the metaphorical transference of ideas of 'tension', 'relaxation', 'conflict' and 'resolution'. (p. 94)

He also examines how our experience of the elements of music and their dependence on metaphorical description acts on musical expression when listening to music. The analogy he examines is how understanding music may be like understanding people through the concept of "empathy." He concludes, in a complicated argument, that although this may be an interesting way of looking at expression in music, we can never be sure, as with empathizing with a person, if we are experiencing the right emotion in the same way that that person does.

Bergman (1994) argues students must have an "objective" understanding of music. They must understand the aesthetic qualities of a certain art form and be able to be critical of artistic properties, which for him is different from simply expressing like or dislike:

If the objective conditions of aesthetic judgements rely on the body of knowledge involving aesthetic qualities, it is incumbent upon the arts education teachers to help foster an understanding of these qualities in their students. The subjective conditions involving the students' feelings toward a piece of art may not be something conducive to an educational process, but the reasons they give for these feelings may be....To conceive of a work of art critically and to convince others of what they consider to be the most adequate interpretation of an art piece are intellectual achievements which are necessary for students if they are to gain understanding through the arts. (p. 25)
Tanner (1985) argues that understanding music is a matter of degree; it is not necessary to understand every possible aspect of music to say that one understands it at all. Tanner outlines three levels of understanding.

Level 1 is a matter of sensing the nature of the thematic material.... [Understanding music at this basic level consists in the ability to follow how the themes in the music unfold, to be able to hear the basic structure of the music]. Level 2 is the level at which one begins to explain how the music works by talking of modulations, inversions, counterpoints and the rest. [This level moves beyond level one in that it explains how the music is written and what changes are made so the themes and structure of the music unfold as they do]. Level 3 takes us from the realm of the technical - which naturally involves a certain amount of theory - into that of the explicitly theoretical. (p. 230)

This third level involves reconciling what Tanner calls the "background" and "foreground" of the music.

The background consists of the common stock of rules and idioms in which the music of the time is written, and is presupposed by the piece which will inevitably employ these rules extensively. The foreground is what the piece actually consists in (1985,p.230). A full understanding of such a piece will involve seeing what the precise balance of background and foreground is, and in exploring the relationship between the two. (p.231)

Tanner does not ignore the expressive elements of music but makes three points:

1. To speak of music in emotional terms only does not indicate that a person understands it.

2. Experiencing the expressive aspects of music goes hand in
hand with understanding how it works according to the levels above.

3. At times we simply lack the words to explain the emotional experience we have when listening to music, just as we do not have a language which can encapsulate all our experiences in life:

It isn't that we haven't yet hit on it, and that at least some of our perplexities about music would be solved if we did, but that there are no features of our experience of music that elude our present vocabularies- or at any rate not to any greater extent than that to which our experience of the world in general, that is to say, in all its particulars, eludes our linguistic resources. (p. 218)

He argues that the type of puzzlement which we experience in trying to understand occurrences in music which are surprising to us, such as uncommon chords and uncommon passages, is similar to trying to understand the effect a poem can have even when we understand each of the words. While we do say that we understand a piece of music or a poem in terms of understanding its constituent parts, and we do understand that certain parts or passages seem odd to us, we often do not understand this "odd part." His point is that "our failure to understand some linguistic performances is similar to our failure to understand non-linguistic ones" (p. 224). Sometimes we simply lack the language to describe the affects, feelings, or experiences we have when we read different parts of a poem or hear certain parts of a piece of music.
Budd (1985) continues Tanner's theme and proposes that a person's understanding can be assessed under four different dimensions.

Someone's understanding of a musical work can be said to be superficial if although he can follow a performance of the work without feeling lost, he fails to hear much of the significant detail or structure of the work. His understanding of a musical work can be said to be inaccurate (or imprecise) if, although he can follow a performance of a work well, he has a mistaken (or only a rather indefinite) conception of how the music should sound, and so how it should be performed. The third category of understanding is this: someone's understanding of music can be said to be narrow if it covers few kinds of styles of music, either in the sense that he is not able to follow most forms of music or in the sense that he is not able to appreciate most forms of music i.e., to see what value there is in them. Finally, someone's understanding of music can be said to be primitive if he can respond only to the simplest musical relations and structures. (p.234)

Budd examines Scruton's thesis to draw his own conclusion regarding the musical experience beyond the structure of the music. He agrees with Scruton's assertion that there is more to the perception of the musical elements of rhythm, harmony and melody than just hearing them as sounds but he disagrees that the interpretation relies strictly on metaphor. He argues that Scruton's reliance on metaphors without identifying what possible interpretations these metaphors may have, is not helpful or useful: "musical experience cannot have a merely metaphorical essence (or an essence part of which is merely metaphorical)" (p. 242). Instead Budd believes that:
...the most fundamental features of musical experience—those that lie at the heart of musical understanding—are not representational but instead sensational properties of the experience... (p.245)

Budd then turns to the question of whether it is necessary "that someone should possess specifically musical concepts or specifically musical terminology, if he is to be able to experience a musical work with full understanding" (p. 246).

He argues that a person can hear specific music sounds and understand a musical work through recognizing these sounds without being able to name them, and that a person must possess musical concepts only to "engage in the practice of musical analysis and criticism" (p. 247). And further he holds that this task can be discharged only by the use of technical terms that have been developed to describe the nature of musical events in detail (p.248).

However at the end of the article he appears to contradict himself:

...the musically literate listener is in a more desirable position than the illiterate listener, not with respect to experiencing music with understanding but in his capacity to make clear both to himself and to others the reasons for his musical preferences. At the level of explanation beyond the most crude the musically illiterate listener is not only condemned to silence: he is not in a position to comprehend his own responses to music. (p. 248)
Cross-Cultural Perspective

Universal generic view

Swanwick (1988b, 1999) argues that music education is "open" rather than "closed." By this he means that music education, should be open to the music of all cultures and open to making connections to the "world of communities outside of institutions" (1999, p. 139).

Swanwick has argued against the notion that we can understand the music of other cultures only if we have the same cultural background ourselves, and that understanding music is therefore socially determined and culturally embedded:

If we believe that any musical tradition is able to be interpreted only through extra-musical references shared within a particular culture, then it follows that response to music will be a local phenomenon from which people of other cultures are largely excluded. If music is always so tightly woven into social structures and specific cultural practices, how can people respond to the music of other times and places? (1988b, p. 101)

He has consistently argued that we can understand the "formal procedures" of the music of all cultures through the teaching of musical structure (not to be confused with musical "form") which is composed of "basic processes:"

Unlike expressive characterization, these formal procedures are not so easily identified with particular cultural groups: The basic processes of repetition and contrast, with the derived devices of variation, transformation and re-positioning, are common across the musics of the world: their roots lie in the
psychological universal of human perception, the ways in which we all seek to organize experience into meaning and coherence. (1988a, p.100 and 1988b, p.4)

Swanwick has also argued against a formalistic interpretation, made by Elliott (1995), and others, of the "music education as aesthetic education" philosophy promoted by Reimer (1989) below. He argues that our aesthetic experiences must be seen within the traditions and conventions of a particular culture rather than based on some type of intrinsic structural value of the music. For him, the aesthetic experience of music is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for artistic understanding.

Elliott (1989, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1996) has repeatedly argued against "music education as aesthetic education" and for the inclusion of music of other cultures in music education. Elliott focuses on the problem of an aesthetic experience being a necessary and sufficient condition to cause a sound to be called "music" and the inappropriateness of the imposition of the Western aesthetic on musics outside the Western tradition. His interpretation of "aesthetics," based in the aesthetic theory of 18th and 19th century Europe, argues that the aesthetic concept of music has prevented us from approaching the music of other cultures in a manner that allows us to come to an understanding of it.

Although Elliott has much to say about Western art music I have chosen to include his work in the cross-cultural perspective because his philosophy is based in cross-cultural music education.

31
Of course, advocates of the MEAE [music education as aesthetic education] philosophy will also resist this book's cultural view of music listening on the basis of their conviction that all music everywhere must be listened to in one way: purely, or acontextually—for aesthetic qualities alone, free of all other references and associations. What aesthetic educators overlook, however, is that musical sounds are culture-based artistic construction, not aesthetic qualities .... Furthermore, MEAE's notion of aesthetic listening is, in fact, to adopt a socially embedded ideology of music and listening that owes its implausible tenets to a small group of dead, white, European male thinkers. (1995, p. 193)

Because Elliott has written extensively on the topic of understanding the music of other cultures, I will summarize his main points or themes. He looks at music as culture (as being inseparable from its cultural context and encapsulating the elements of a particular culture) and not just within culture (as something which we can remove from its cultural context and contemplate on its own). He argues that in cultures other than Western culture, music is something that people do, not just an object to be held up for aesthetic contemplation. "Music education as aesthetic education" as a philosophy for the study of multicultural music is, therefore, useless because music is part of culture and cannot be separated from it. However, despite his arguments against the Western perspective and for the importance of culture, Elliott has clearly taken a standpoint in favour of generic concepts: there are concepts that we can describe which are common to all music.

Elliott believes that we understand music through his concept of music based on the "self-evident" principle that music
is an "intentional human activity" which is a four-dimensional construct involving a "i) doer (musicer), ii) some kind of doing (musicing), iii) something done (music), iv) the complete context in which doers do what they do." (1994, p.16). We should approach each of these:

head-on, in back, in front, and around. For example, we can look straight at what is done (e.g., Beethoven's Eroica), and in front of it (what it leads to, or causes), and in back of it (where it comes from), and around it (the immediate context of its use and production). (1994, p. 16)

Elliott also proposes three uses of the word "music" ("MUSIC", "Music" and "music") to summarize his concept of it:

MUSIC (upper case) is a diverse human practice consisting in many different musical practices of Musics (upper case M). Each and every musical practice (or Music) involves two corresponding and mutually reinforcing types of intentional human activity: music-making and music-listening. The word 'music'(lower case) refers to the particular kinds of artistic actions, 'products' or auditory events-as-performances that eventuate from the efforts of particular kinds of musical practitioners. (1994, p. 18)

He has most recently argued (1994, 1995, 1996) that we must approach all music through the praxis of performance, which is a "generic" capacity all humans possess:

Humans are born with generic human capacities for music-listening and music-making that are activated and manifested in different kinds of musical practices and products according to the artistic-cultural contexts. (1996, p. 8)
Further to this he claims that musical understanding consists entirely of being able to make music (perform) well:

Some people want to claim that musical understanding is distinct from knowing how to make music well. The claim is false. It rests on the dualistic assumption that verbal knowledge about music represents true understanding, while the ability to make music well is a mechanical skill of behaviour...The book's praxial philosophy of music education holds that musicianship equals musical understanding. (1995, p.68)

Cultural specific view

Fiske (1993) believes that we understand music as a "metalanguage" in that it is self-referential only; its sonic materials do not refer to anything outside the tone and rhythm in and of themselves. He argues that any "aesthetic attitudes" that a person has about music are their own personal experience and beliefs about what they are hearing. Since music is a metalanguage, he argues that it is also a "closed system:" "one that is limited solely to the identification and intercomparison of tonal-rhythmic patterns of any recognizable musical language" (p.114). What this means for understanding music cross-culturally is that the vocabulary of a particular musical language of a particular culture is not transferrable at all to any other type of music:

In fact, the vocabulary of a musical language fails to extend beyond that language at all, so that in order to have an understanding or knowledge of a particular musical language, it is necessary that that understanding or knowledge be expressed in the vocabulary. (p.130)
He clearly argues against generic concepts of any type because there is no universal music language or vocabulary. He argues that, by superimposing Western musical language, using terms such as interval or scale, on the music of another culture, we do not come closer to understanding the music of another culture, if they do not possess the same concepts that we do. Fiske argues that what we perceive to be scales or intervals of some sort other than Western ones, cannot be referred to as such, because it presumes them to be the same as ours, when they are most often not. He concludes:

Probably the most that we can understand when we listen to a foreign musical language that breaks the octave down into different divisions from our own are stretched, distorted, out-of-tune Western musical intervals. We really do not hear foreign musical languages the same way that natives of those cultures do. (For the same reasons, they do not hear our music the way that we do either). (p.131)

The cultural specific perspective is also supported by the historical/empirical research of Walker (1986, 1990, 1992, 1996a, 1996b), which can best be summarized by the following equation: understanding music equals what we believe equals culture. Walker argues that how we understand music is culture bound- based in our musical beliefs or the musical beliefs of a particular culture. One of Walker's contentions is that:

The enormous edifice of Western theory and practice is just as much an artifact, a product of cultural beliefs, as is the music of the Pacific Northwest Indian or any other cultural group. (1990, p.19)
He argues that in examining the music of any culture, we must not focus only on the sound properties of the music involved, but music's role in each cultural system and the meanings which this system brings to the music.

Walker has done considerable historical research into the nature of our Western musical belief system. One of the major themes in Walker's work is that we cannot hope to understand even all the music of the Western world let alone the music of other cultures through any type of aesthetic experience. He argues that 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory is applicable only to the music of a particular time period and that all notions of the "aesthetic" are tied to this particular aesthetic theory. This means, according to Walker, that in the history of Western music, the music of the pre-Romantic period: Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque as well as post-romantic is not subject to any aesthetic considerations. He argues further that since aesthetic theory is not applicable to even all Western music, it is simply not applicable to the music of other cultures.

Walker (1986, 1992) has also carried out empirical research on the Western concept of pitch and concludes that the fluctuations in the frequency of Western pitch, or vibrato, is heard in the context of Western diatonic melody and harmony and that these fluctuations in frequency, within the diatonic scale, do not occur in other cultures who do not base their music on the Western diatonic scale. He has also argued that other cultures
produce sounds different from Western pitch based on variations in their "spectral energy and other acoustical parameters" (1986, p.47). From these claims, he concludes that the concept of "pitch" simply cannot be used across cultures, because the Western concept of pitch cannot be proved to be the only musical sound structure. He argues that by attempting to use the concept of pitch in the music of other cultures, we are discussing the music in terms that impose Western concepts on that music, thereby denigrating the music and the culture to which it belongs.

According to Walker, generic concepts not only are impossible, but there is no point in perusing them since they do not aid us understanding the cultural context.

I am arguing that musical knowledge, behaviour, auditory receptor mechanisms, are all culturally constructed. There cannot be universal qualities of musical sounds, nor of brain behaviour, nor of such things as aesthetic responses. All are essentially constructed from within a complex web of interactions between the organism, the environment, the past experiences of the organism, the intentions of both perceiver and sender, and many other variables. (1993, p.13)

Walker asserts that we cannot universalise the Western approach to understanding music, which he characterizes to include Western beliefs, Western terminology and Western concepts, to understand the music of other cultures. His central thesis is the ways we understand music in the West have nothing in common with the music of other cultures; we have to approach
music through a "cultural praxis" involving a team of anthropological experts rather than music educators. Walker has even argued, because of its Western implications, the word "music" itself should not be used to refer to sounds in other cultures which themselves do not have a word at least roughly translatable as "music."

The cultural reconcilers

In the article "Can We Understand the Music of Foreign Cultures?" Reimer (1994) outlines three positions taken in the debate on this topic in music education. The first two are a detailed summary of the main arguments made by the particularists, which I have labelled writers from the relative cultural specific perspective, and the universalists, which I have labelled writers from the universal generic concepts perspective. The third position, which is Reimer's position on this topic, serves to reconcile the previous two positions.

Reimer sees the particularist position as one that views using Western concepts to understand the music of other cultures as not only incommensurable with any concepts used by other

---

7 Although Reimer has written extensively about Western art music, he has extended his philosophy of "music education as aesthetic education" to the music of other cultures and has written some interesting articles on understanding the music of other cultures (1991c, 1993, 1994). Thus as with Elliott's work, I have included Reimer's work in the cross-cultural perspective. I am very aware of Reimer's work A Philosophy of Music Education (1989), but here I have chosen to focus on what he has to say about understanding the music of other cultures.
cultures, but also degrading. According to this position using Western concepts to understand the music of other cultures imposes Western preconceptions about music. Also another important argument for this position is that we cannot understand the music of another culture as a person of that culture does because we are not a member of that culture. Important to the argument is brain research which shows that the brain processes information differently from culture to culture and this is a clear limitation to studying the music of other cultures. He sees this position as concluding that we should study only our own culture’s music, in the recognition of the notion that it is not superior to other music of the world.

Reimer sees the universalist position as one which asserts that musical understanding is universally possible for all cultures who make music. All cultures, according to their own criteria, have styles, forms, composers, performers, etc., and a criterion of goodness for their music. The functional role we assign to music of foreign cultures has an aesthetic element. There are universal concepts applicable to all music, such as music has beginnings and endings, some repetition, and points of greater and lesser intensity. As Reimer sees it, this position concludes that there is a universal world music because of the global village exchange of ideas, there is no separation of musics as belonging to different cultures, and we can understand the music of foreign cultures.
In position three, Reimer attempts to reconcile the previous two positions. He argues that as individuals in our society, we always keep the identity of our own musical cultures when investigating other musical cultures (i.e., we can never hope to see them entirely removed from our own perspective), but at the same time, we can hope to come to some understanding of the music of other cultures.

It goes too far to an extreme, I believe, to argue that each different culture is so different that no entry into its cultural realities is possible by anyone not a full-fledged member of it. But it also goes too far to an extreme, I would suggest, to argue the reverse—that every culture, no matter how different, is accessible easily if not fully to anyone desiring to enter it. (1996, p. 242)

Bowman (1992, 1993) argues that we cannot rely on understanding music through the aesthetic perspective, based in 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory, as somehow "universally" applicable to all music. According to the aesthetic theory which Bowman (1993) outlines, music that sustains a great degree of contemplative effort is deemed to have high aesthetic value and is thus deemed to have high musical value and high artistic value. The equation of aesthetic value with musical and artistic value is problematic for Bowman because, since the nature of some musics do not conform to 18th century aesthetic theory, they are labelled as unmusical and unartistic. Aesthetic contemplation in this fashion, as the focus of aristocratic intellectual pursuit, is to the exclusion of the performance, social, and cultural
aspects of the music.

Since music is so deeply embedded in such a broad range of human social endeavour, the educational goals of musical criticism are seriously constrained by the segregation of so-called "intrinsic" values and meanings, from "extrinsic" ones. To restrict critical scrutiny to the "strictly musical," as encouraged by (formalist) "aesthetic" orientations, is to separate music from the contexts and beliefs which are often essential to its full perception and full understanding. (1992, p.11)

He argues that approaching music through the aesthetic perspective alone, by the nature of its assumptions, restricts what we take into account to understand. The aesthetic approach excludes philosophical, sociological, cultural or political aspects of the music that are important to its understanding.

However he reconciles the Western aesthetic orientation to understanding music with the music of other cultures, by arguing that it is important in music education to assign value to music. It is this aspect of Western aesthetic theory, the notion of assigning value, that we must consider when studying music cross-culturally. He argues that crucial to understanding music is being able to give reasons for the judgements we make of it rather than making unsubstantiated judgements. Music criticism goes hand in hand with our understanding of it and makes us capable of giving reasoned value judgements:

Criticism seeks to educate musical sensibilities and the musical imagination in ways that enrich responsiveness to, and appreciation for, subtlety and ingenuity. Its grounding in genuine musical
understanding buttressed by reasons, will inevitably reduce one's esteem for the pedestrian and the commonplace: the musical fare for the untutored majority. (1992, p.12)

Summary and Research Questions

One may ascertain from this review of selected literature that there is much controversy surrounding the nature of understanding music and a great variety of angles from which it is approached. Ridley (1993) argues that understanding music consists in knowing what to listen for in a particular type of music including the expressive elements. Davies (1994) argues understanding music is understanding not only how it is put together, but why. Scruton (1983) argues understanding music is based in how we hear it through concepts extended by metaphorical transference. Bergman (1994) sorts out the difference between people believing that they understand music simply because they like it and understanding its objective qualities. Tanner (1985) argues that there are different levels of understanding including the level of the "something else" in music which we find hard to describe. Budd (1985) deals with understanding how the music is put together and how sophisticated this knowledge needs to be to constitute various levels of understanding. He questions the idea that we need to possess musical concepts to understand music.

Swanwick (1988b, 1999) argues that we understand music of all cultures through recognition of universal musical structures and basic process and that our aesthetic experiences must be seen
within the traditions and conventions of a particular culture. Elliott (1995) argues for understanding "music as culture" and that there is one universal approach to music and that is through performance.

Fiske (1993) concludes that we understand music as a language specific to each culture. Walker (1996a) argues that how we understand music is based on understanding culture first, music second. Reimer (1994) and Bowman (1993) argue that we must not go to either extreme of understanding only through generic concepts or only through culture, but must find a middle ground between the two extremes.

Below I present the specific research questions I will address raised by this overview of the perspectives on understanding music. The main question is, what do we mean when we say that we understand the music of our own culture or the music of another culture? This large question is made up of many smaller ones.

1. What constitutes a basic understanding of music in terms of how it is put together?

2. Do we need to have musical concepts to say that we understand music?

3. How do we account for the expressive elements of our understanding of music?

4. Are there different levels of sophistication of understanding music and what are they?
5. What aspects of music outside of its structure and expressive elements are necessary to a full understanding?

6. Are there generic musical characteristics which can help us understand the music of non-Western cultures, characteristics shared by Western music?

7. Can we only understand the music of each culture based in the study of that culture?

The next chapter outlines these questions in more detail so that in ensuing chapters, I can assess the adequacy of the arguments which these various questions reflect.
Chapter 3

Understanding Music: The Question Issues and Problems

Introduction

In chapter 2, I outlined a number of perspectives on understanding music by various researchers. In this chapter, I outline the questions, issues and problems raised by these various perspectives in more detail.

It is clear that the question of what it means to understand music in our present-day musical and educational environment is heavily weighted on understanding music other than Western "classical" music:

Experimental psychology, information theory and hearing tests have all been used to build up an objective picture of acoustics and sound perception in a new context which does not necessarily identify the concept of a musical language with the Western musical tradition, but takes into account musical traditions different from our own, along with other sounds and other timbres different from those of the instruments we are most familiar with, other intervals and other musical conventions. Post-war music has had the undoubted merit of deglamorizing and putting into perspective the sound system of Western Classical music which has previously seemed the only one possible for music. (Fubini 1990, p.492)

In the past, issues of musical identity and musical obligation seemed to be more straightforward than they are in our time. Many Western musicians identified the European classical tradition as theirs and believed that they should care principally about it. Not so today. Some identify with jazz, others rock, still others, a subset of classical music-be it early music, contemporary music and so on. Many in the public at large take mediated music to be theirs over the
traditional musics that may have been a part of their ethnic or cultural heritage. (Jorgenson, 1998, p.82)

I have often noticed in my own life experience with music that people who like to listen to music or enjoy hearing others play it, brush aside any understanding of it as a mystery to them, something better left to musicians and music educators. Thus it is important that music researchers have attempted to determine what understanding music means and establish some necessary conditions for understanding music.

It is indeed a daunting task to consider what it means to understand music. The first reaction, at least with regard to Western art music, is to assume the question rests in the age-old debate of whether musical meaning is intrinsic or extrinsic to the music itself and the endless debate as to the nature of the aesthetic experience. In music education we cannot assume that some type of subjective aesthetic experience or some vague sense of musical "meaning" are the same as understanding music. To resolve the problems of aesthetic theory and come to some final conclusion about when and with whom aesthetic theory originated, is not my purpose here. Rather my purpose, in the ensuing chapters, is to examine arguments raised by various researchers to characterize understanding music and try to evaluate the adequacy of their characterizations for music education. This task, I believe is a crucial one to music and music education, since when we speak of understanding music we need to have a clear idea of what we mean. If we are teaching to promote and
encourage understanding music, we need to know what understanding music means.

**Western Art Music Perspective**

Researchers writing about Western art music are questioning what it means to understand music within this established tradition. The reader should not assume that this consists in an exhaustive summary of the various aesthetic studies in the relationship between the music and the aesthetic experience. The point of discussion surrounding Western art music is not to outline its history of aesthetics, history of composers or time periods such as "Classical," "Romantic" periods, etc. Rather it is to assume these aspects of Western art music and to look at the questions raised by considering what it means to understand music within a particular tradition, for a person who has little previous experience of it or for a person who listens to Western art music but claims not to understand it. In this section, I will examine various arguments regarding understanding Western art music.

The first point made by most researchers is that the first step in understanding music involves the recognition of three basic musical elements of rhythm, harmony, and melody.\(^8\) That is, an account of understanding music at the most basic general level

---

\(^8\) In the early part of their discussions they do not consider form or expressive elements.
involves how we perceive sounds as music. Researchers such as Ridley (1993), Tanner (1985), and Budd (1985), in discussing music understanding, concern themselves firstly, with what basic knowledge of those three music elements is necessary to a rudimentary understanding of music. This means that understanding Western music first begins with being able to recognise a rhythm compared with a melody or harmony, to organize the sounds heard into these categories and not just hear them as raw sounds. But, further to this, and at more specific levels, the listener must be able to hear how the rhythm, melody or harmony combine to create the piece of music as a whole called the "structure" or "form" of the piece. This aspect of understanding music through musical elements is believed to be the easiest to discuss. It is concerned with how people listen to music in such a way that it is heard, at least structurally speaking, in the way that it is meant to be heard.

But returning to the question concerning musical elements, it is not as uncomplicated as it first appears. It may be difficult for non-musicians to explain how they know when they are hearing either a rhythm, melody or harmony when they are hearing them. It is easy for musicians and music educators to assume that everybody not only hears music in terms of melody, harmony and rhythm, but knows the terminology and their

---

9 In the early parts of their discussions they do not consider structure or expressive elements.
definitions. However people hear music, through repeated experiences with music surrounding them, before they know music terminology and definitions. This is where the discussion of elements becomes complicated. To give an account of understanding we need to provide descriptions of what a listener needs to hear to experience the music with understanding, but we cannot assume that a person possesses the terminology or the accompanying definitions.

But for a discussion of understanding music, and especially for music education it is necessary to give a description of the kind of experiences of sounds a person needs to have for them to count as music. This brings us back to the question of how we understand music elements. Scruton (1983) has argued that we understand them through the use of metaphor, whereas Ridley (1993) and Budd (1985) have criticized this approach and argue that musical elements are understood under some type of description or definition. I return to this question in the next chapter.

The second point made with regard to understanding Western art music is that beyond knowing how a piece of music is put together, we must know why it is put together as it is. This "why" question for Davies means that we know "why its being put together in this way, rather than that, is significant to its being a concerto as opposed to being a symphony" (p.70). In this stress on the importance of "why," he argues for a type of
contextualism which requires that we compare the structure and form of one piece of music with pieces of the same type.

...one can have the fullest understanding of a given work only if one has a similar understanding of all the works and conventions which establish its context, and these will include prior and subsequent pieces, as well as contemporary ones... I believe that because their identities and features depend very much on historical/cultural location and their artistic categories. (p. 81)

The third point is that understanding music requires the recognition of the relationship between musical elements and emotional and expressive qualities, as Tanner (1985) points out. If we understand how a particular piece of music is put together as it is and why, part of understanding the music is also understanding its emotional and expressive elements and the experiences we may have when we listen to it. In order to recognize that we are hearing music when we hear it, we have to perceive it as more than a succession of sounds and recognize the emotional or expressive aspects of music.

The fourth point is that much of the discussion of understanding of Western art music suggests that there may be levels of sophistication of understanding music. As we saw in chapter 2, Tanner (1985) describes three levels of understanding music and Budd (1985) describes understanding music along different dimensions: superficial, inaccurate, narrow and primitive. If we accept that there are various degrees of understanding music then we do not have to conclude that we need
the knowledge of a musician, music historian, or a theorist to have some understanding of music.

There is one final point raised in the discussion of Western art music and its "broader human context" or culture. The notion of factors previously believed to be extrinsic to the music itself in Western art music, such as culture, have certainly been brought into question as Sadie points out:

I do not find myself especially sympathetic to a philosophy in which every work of art is regarded as an independent entity that can profitably be discussed simply for what it is: "what it is"—and thus the understanding of it—depends on when it was created, how men and women were thinking at the time, and the purpose for which it was created, as well as the techniques used in its creation. The mystical complexities of Bach or the heroic strivings of Beethoven assume a greater significance if we can begin to realize why these men were drawn to the mystical or the heroic....The aim is to give the reader a sense of music as a part of the fabric of life, as something that changes as the world does, and so heighten his or her understanding of it through this broader human context.(1987, p.11)

This expansion of the questions raised by the Western art music perspective on understanding, raises an additional set of more precise questions which I will address in the following chapters.

1. How do we understand rhythm or other Western musical elements--by metaphors or under some other description?

2. Is it necessary that we possess the musical terminology and definitions of harmony, rhythm, and melody to understand music?
3. What role does the recognition of various musical elements and how the elements are combined have to do with understanding the music as a whole?

4. Is there a difference between understanding a piece of music and understanding art music as a whole?

5. If we can only speak of music in emotional terms, can we be said to understand it?

Cross-cultural Perspective

Researchers writing about understanding music cross-culturally, question what it means to understand music of other cultures outside of the Western art music tradition and other Western music genres such as jazz and rock and roll. As I outlined in chapter 1 and chapter 2, there are two main questions regarding understanding music cross-culturally: 1) Are there generic musical characteristics which can help us understand the music of most cultures, characteristics shared by Western art music? 2) Do we understand the music of each culture based in the study of that culture? These juxtaposed questions are the foundation for the debate surrounding two different viewpoints on understanding music cross-culturally: the universal or generic view versus the relative cultural specific view, which I outlined in chapter 1.

Researchers (Elliott, 1995; Swanwick, 1988a, 1999) writing from the universal or generic view argue that we can understand
the music of most cultures through a set of generic music
concepts which are applicable to all music such as when the music
begins and ends, how it moves, groups of sounds, layers of
sounds, melodic and rhythmic patterns, how tension is created,
and when the climax is reached. From this position, authors argue
that while culture is important to music it is not a limiting
factor to understanding the music of other cultures and that we
can extend the notions of aesthetic experience and value to the
music of other cultures. ¹⁰

Researchers (Fiske, 1993; Walker, 1990) writing from the
cultural specific position advocate that culture itself is the
limiting factor in understanding the music of another culture; if
we do not understand the culture first, then we cannot understand
the music. The extreme form of this argument is that we simply
cannot understand the music of other cultures because we are not
part of the culture in which that music exists. There are at
least three important underlying arguments for the cultural
specific position, which are arguments against attempting to
understand the music of other cultures through:
1) Western music beliefs, 2) Western concepts, and 3) Western
aesthetics and aesthetic language. Hence, these arguments have a

¹⁰ Part of Elliott's (1995) argument is the curious exception. He argues
for understanding music through performance which includes within it other
generic concepts. However he has always argued strongly against "music
education as aesthetic education," because people of other cultures do not
have aesthetic experiences based in 18th and 19th century Western aesthetic
theory. This latter argument is an important one which I outline in this
chapter.
negative thesis. That is, they argue about what cross-cultural music understanding is not rather than about what it is or could be. In the next three sections, I will outline the main points of these arguments to show where the problem areas are. By pursuing the cultural specific arguments and pointing out their faults, in this and the following chapter, I am, in part, presenting the arguments for the cultural reconciliation position, which is the view I believe to be the most justified.

**Argument against Western "musical beliefs"**

The first of these arguments which I will address is what I call the argument against musical beliefs. In his book *Musical Beliefs*, the crux of Walker's (1990) argument is that what we believe music to be in the West is based on various combinations of Pythagorean Music of the Spheres, Plato's doctrine of ethos, numerology, influences of the church, and political power struggles. His notion of "beliefs" seems to include all sorts of practices, standards, and concepts which help us to understand music in the West. He argues that our musical beliefs are not based in "true" facts and that he can thus "prove" that we cannot use our musical beliefs to understand the music of other cultures. Walker asserts that in the West we have invented an incredibly complex musical belief system which cannot be supported through physics, mathematics, history or philosophy to result in the natural, the correct or the superior musical
Yet, he argues, the majority of music educators assume that our system is "natural" and the music from every other culture is deviant.

As Walker stresses, he believes our perception of music in the West is that somehow we have got it "right" and that we can prove it scientifically. Walker goes to great lengths to try to "prove" that our Western beliefs are based in "fallacies." He argues that the human ear is not any more predisposed to Western pitch than the pitched sounds of music of other cultures and gives an exhaustive explanation of how our "well-tempered" scale is based on a system of numbers rooted in Pythagoreanism and Music of the Spheres. We also use intervals (i.e., the distance between the notes) of "perfect" fourths and "perfect" fifths when they are not mathematically perfect at all, since the ratio which expresses them in our modern tuning systems is not made up of whole numbers (although in earlier tuning systems whole number ratios were used). He argues that we must realize that not only the theoretical but the metaphysical underpinnings of Western music are human, social inventions. Thus there is no reason to suppose that the Western system is "superior." These musical beliefs have been influenced by the interpretation and reinterpretation of various philosophers, musicians, composers, etc., over time as well as by the modern day media.

Based on Walker's analysis of Western musical beliefs, he argues that through showing us that we are not biologically more
predetermined to be receptive to Western music (western pitch is not universal or "natural"), through pointing to the lack of a scientific basis for the construction of the Western scale system (by this he means that many other scale systems are equally possible), and through examining Western metaphysics, that our complex system of musical beliefs are not "true." He states, "We fall into the trap of ethnocentric thinking by assuming that our theories and beliefs are "the truth" (1990, p.217). What this means in music education, Walker argues, is that we cannot continue to perpetuate the notion that "our" music "came first," so to speak and that all others came afterwards.

I will return to Walker's arguments in the next chapter and address the numerous contradictions in his arguments. I will also examine what sense we can make of his arguments that Western musical beliefs are not "true" and what this argument contributes to the understanding of the music of other cultures.

*Argument against Western art music concepts*

The crux of this argument is that since understanding melody, harmony and rhythm, as discussed above, forms the basic understanding of Western music, these concepts are "not applicable" to the music of other cultures. The argument rests partly on the claim that simply because Western art music concepts are Western they ought not to be applied to the music of other cultures. Part of the reason for this claim is that Western
art music concepts are tied to the "aesthetic experience" we have when we listen to Western art music. Therefore, teaching from Western art music concepts would imply that non-Western musics are to be understood in terms of their aesthetic element and that this should not be claimed to be the case, as discussed below.

Another claim used to support the argument is that since our Western art concepts are too restrictive to include even all the music within that tradition they ought not be applied to the music of other cultures. Walker (1990) argues specifically that as Western (art) music moved into the 20th century it became more concerned with the manipulation of sounds rather than elements of melody, rhythm and harmony. He argues that composers were no longer concerned with writing a "tune" and harmony to go with it, but with the manipulation of individual sounds, (eg. serialism, atonal music) and therefore Western art music concepts could not even deal adequately with modern Western music.

The conclusion of this argument against Western art music concepts is that they cannot be universalized, i.e., Western concepts cannot be used to understand the music of other cultures, nor can any musical "concepts," because the use of such concepts implies a Western approach to music which begins with concepts rather than culture. This argument raises one central question: How can we conclude that simply because a concept is used in Western art music it is not useful to help understand the music of other cultures?
Argument against Western aesthetics and aesthetic language

This topic is perhaps the most confusing as well as misunderstood regarding the understanding of music cross-culturally. The premise in the literature has been that any reference to aesthetics, or any notion of aesthetics at all, is encapsulated by a certain aesthetic theory and type of music. "Aesthetic experience," "concept of the aesthetic," "aesthetic perception" and numerous other phrases in which we find the word "aesthetic" are assumed to be tied to 18th and 19th century Western aesthetic theory based on Western art music of the same time period. To complicate things further, different interpretations of 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory are possible. The main difference in interpretation lies in whether this aesthetic theory includes "social, moral, or intellectual concerns" (Lamarque, 1999, p.7) and "social and psychological dimensions" (Crowther, 1993, p.71), or whether aesthetic theory is tied strictly to artistic formalism:

Formalism concentrates so exclusively on the internal qualities of an art work and their inherent excellence of proportion as to deny the existence of extra-artistic meaning and value or at least to deny that they contribute anything to the art work and the experience of it. (Reimer, 1989, p. 24)

It seems Walker (1990), Elliott (1995), and Bowman (1993) have accepted not only that "aesthetics" must be discussed in terms of 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory, but also that
they rely on a formalistic interpretation of this theory to make their arguments.

Before outlining the problems with the equation of aesthetics with a particular aesthetic theory, it is important to outline the basic tenets of this formalistic interpretation of Western aesthetic theory. One of the best summaries I have seen of this interpretation of Western aesthetic theory is by Merriam (1964) who sets out to discover whether Western aesthetic concepts can be applied cross-culturally. Merriam looks at six "factors" that he believes are attributed to the aesthetic defined in Western terminology to see if the aesthetic value system holds across cultures. He believes that the Western aesthetic is attributed by either the Western observer or creator and unless other cultures hold the same values, the notion of the aesthetic is useless.

The first factor Merriam considers is the sense of objectivity that the Western aesthetic presupposes and the isolation of music from its context. The second factor he considers is the manipulation of form for its own sake. By this he means composing music in full recognition of what the constituent elements are and manipulation of these elements solely for the purpose of artistic expression and activity, removed from any sort of outside purpose or function. The third factor is the attribution of emotion producing qualities to certain musical sounds. The fourth factor is that beauty is
always tied up with the aesthetic:

... [not] that art and beauty are the same thing, that art is always beautiful, or that beauty is always artistic. However, the concept of beauty as applicable to the art product or process is an integral part of the Western aesthetic; beauty is irrevocably tied up with art. (1964, p.266)

The fifth factor is that the Western aesthetic has as its purposeful intent to create something aesthetic. By this he means that Western composers deliberately set out to create art objects that would be aesthetically admired by others. This is tied up with the notion of Western music being composed for the enjoyment of others. The final factor Merriam considers is the presence of a philosophy of an aesthetic that is primarily verbalized in Western society. According to this interpretation of aesthetic theory, music that demands a great degree of contemplative effort is deemed to have high aesthetic value and is thus deemed to have high musical value and high artistic value. Moreover we respond or feel which music is emotionally effective or "good" by some subjective evaluation of its intrinsic qualities.

The arguments against including the notion of aesthetics or aesthetic language to help understand the music of other cultures are:

1. The "period-specific" argument put forth by Elliott (1995), Walker (1990), and Bowman (1993), holds that we cannot use any type of aesthetic language to help us understand the music of other cultures because the theory was developed in the
18th and 19th centuries, and is applicable only to Western music of that time period. It is not applicable even to all of Western music, let alone the music of other cultures.

In summary, the assumptions underlying the aesthetic concept of music belong to a particular period of Western history and a definite ideology that saw its full flowering in the Romanticism of nineteenth-century Europe. (Elliott, 1995, p. 24)

The idea of "the aesthetic" was largely a product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and served, among other things, as something of a rationalization of the tastes and preferences of particular social classes during that period. (Bowman, 1993, p. 25)

2. Any notion of "value" we have of music is based in Western aesthetic theory of the 18th and 19th centuries and we cannot extend our Western notions of what is "good," "great," or "artistic," music to the music of other cultures. Although this thesis has to do with assessment rather than understanding it seems to be part of the argument.

3. The third argument is a "theory-specific argument as I have outlined above. The argument is that all notions of aesthetics in music are tied to 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory. According to this argument if a certain type of music does not meet all aspects of 18th and 19th aesthetic theory, it cannot be considered aesthetically. Therefore, because in many cultures, music is "functional" as part of everyday life, to accompany chores, festivals, and integrated with dancing as a part of ceremonies, rather than existing for its own sake as an
"artform," we cannot apply any aspects of aesthetic theory or consider the music aesthetically.

To truly understand different musics we must know, among quite a number of other things who uses them, and how, and when, and for what purposes. These concerns do not simply lie outside the purview of the aesthetic canon, they are opposed to it. (Bowman, 1993, p. 28)

Other arguments

In addition to arguments that focus on the use of concepts and the role of aesthetics in understanding music cross-culturally, other types of arguments and evidence have been presented in the literature.

There has been a suggestion of ethical issues involved in understanding music cross-culturally. Reimer (1996), in his criticism of Elliott (1995), asserts that to approach the music of other cultures through performance, which does not focus on "aesthetic" criteria, "denigrates the musicianship of people outside the West, as if they simply sing and play with no regard for the excellence of the musical products" (p.67). Walker (1996b) has called the use of Western pitch "a degrading acoustic identity for the sounds of other cultures" (p. 10), and he has also argued against an "ethnocentric" and "Eurocentric bias" in using "superior" Western concepts to study the music of other cultures (1990).

It seems that both Reimer and Walker are concerned with an ethical sense of "fair play" in coming to understand the music of
other cultures. However, their ethical premises of what constitutes fair play are different. Walker's premise is that to apply a foreign concept to another culture's music, implies that the foreign concept is "superior," and that simply by using the concept you are degrading the people of that culture. Reimer's premise is that unless we examine the music of another culture fully and completely, including the culture's notion of musical excellence, we are degrading the music and the people of that culture.

Walker's argument that it is "morally improper" to understand the music of another culture in terms of one's own concepts, does not make sense. It seems obvious that by using Western concepts to understand music of other cultures we are not necessarily forcing our standards on non-Western musics or degrading the music of other cultures, but may simply be beginning with our own concepts to help make sense of them. It may be argued that there seems nothing immoral about using Western concepts to analyze sounds, as along as we do not assume that they tell us anything about the people and culture producing them.

Reimer's argument, that unless we fully understand the music of another culture we are denigrating the music and the people, is indefensible. If we fail to include all the necessary factors when we attempt to understand the music of another culture, we are not doing an injustice to the music or the people; we may
just not understand it as well as we could. In Reimer's case, his notion of "denigration" seems more a judgement of omission of the importance of issues of musical excellence, rather than a negative judgement of the music or the people of a particular culture.

Ethical arguments of a sense of fair play are an important motivation behind studying music cross-culturally. It seems to be important to ensure that we do not treat the people of different cultures unfairly by attempting to understand their music. However, neither Walker's nor Reimer's arguments have shown that by attempting to understand the music of another culture in different ways that we somehow denigrate the music of that culture or its people.

Psychological information processing theory and neuroscientific research have also been cited in the literature to discuss the question of whether understanding music cross-culturally is based in generic concepts or is strictly culturally based. Psychological information processing theory, has most often been used to support the theory that we are capable of understanding the music of different cultures through generic concepts, (e.g., Reimer, 1994, p. 237). The connection made between psychological information processing theory and generic concepts is, however, tenuous at best. Because there may be basic mental capacities common to all humans this neither proves or disproves that there are generic music concepts across cultures.
Even if various types of evidence deemed from psychological research could support or refute questions of understanding music, presenting this type of evidence is not the focus of my thesis. The focus of my thesis is to expose the complex nature of understanding music, in part so that empirical research may investigate this complex nature rather than what may be isolated aspects of it.

The neuroscientific research of Edelman (1987) has been cited by Walker (1996) to support his view that understanding music cross-culturally is not based in generic concepts deriving from innate brain mechanisms, but rather in culturally determined brain mechanisms which naturally differ from culture to culture:

The way the brain responds changes and develops according to experience (Edelman, 1987), and musical behaviours arise from a particular organism's interactions with a particular environment and with the social group comprising the culture, not from innate brain mechanisms which invariably produce one type of behaviour as opposed to another. (p. 109)

What Walker has missed, is that neuroscientific research neither supports nor refutes his argument against the existence of generic concepts in music, nor does it support his conclusion that there is likely no possible transfer from understanding the music of one culture to understanding the music of another culture.

Other empirical evidence has been put forward by Walker (1992) to show that our Western concepts prevent us from
understanding the music of other cultures. His spectral analysis of vocal sounds shows that the sound waves produced by Western singers do not create the same spectral patterns as the vocalists of other cultures. As a result of this evidence Walker argues that we cannot use the word "pitch" to understand the music of other cultures, because we imply a spectral pattern which may not exist in the music under study. This is another line of argumentation that is not useful for refuting generic concepts across cultures. We can and do use "pitch" and "rhythm" to discuss a wide variety of music from various cultures, and do not assume that all the pitches and rhythms that we hear are identical.

Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the various issues, questions and problems concerning understanding music raised by the literature review.

The researchers writing about Western art music (Budd, 1985; Davies, 1994; Ridley, 1993; Scruton, 1983; Tanner, 1985) give an account of understanding music based in the recognition of musical elements and how we perceive sounds as music. They also describe the importance of understanding why different pieces of music are put together in different ways and how this related to the cultural context and the prevailing artistic conventions of the time. They also raise the important issues of the role that
the emotional and expressive qualities of the music play in understanding it.

The writers from cultural specific view (Fiske, 1993; Walker, 1990) argue for the dismissal of Western concepts, and argue that there are no universal concepts applicable to music of all cultures. This conclusion is based on several different strands of argument which I have separated here as historical, empirical, and ethical, but which are intertwined. The researchers arguing from the culture specific camp argue that even suggesting that we understand the music of other cultures through their "organization," is a reflection of Western rationalism and that there is no aspect of either Western aesthetics, beliefs, or concepts that is appropriate to help us understand the music of other cultures. This perspective relies in part on brain research which shows that there are no preset cognitive mappings on the brain and thus concludes that there are no innate musical abilities or universal conceptual schemes (Walker, 1996a). Fiske (1993) has argued that music is understood by being a member of a particular culture and that once our "cultural template" has been set, there is little to no possible transfer of the understanding of the music of our own culture to the music of another culture.

But if we accept the argument of studying music through culture first, what does this mean for education? Does it mean that we first teach anthropology: customs, beliefs, ways of
living, language, folklore, religious practices and rites of a culture, before we can teach the music? Or does "culture first" mean that we can never recreate the cultural environment of another culture in the classroom and therefore cannot teach the music of other cultures at all?

In the next chapter I consider the counter-arguments against the cultural specific position. The writers from the generic concepts view (Elliott, 1995; Swanwick, 1988a; Schwadron, 1984) argue that although music is not a universal language that can be instantly understood by people of various cultures, it is like a language in that there are universal structures both in the actual music and in the conceptualization of it. They argue that music is a universal in that all cultures have it, and it can be understood through universal concepts and universal conceptualizations of music.

For music education these arguments are taken by some to mean that generic concepts should be used to teach the music within its cultural context. As Nettl (1992) points out, we may not be able to teach the music of another culture in such a way that a student becomes completely competent in the music of that culture; we cannot teach "THE music" of another culture in its entirety but that we can teach something of understanding music as part of its particular culture" (p.3).

At least this discussion points out that there is more than one way to approach understanding music, in other words,
understanding music is not a uni-dimensional idea. We cannot ask if we understand a particular piece or genre of music and assume that understanding means a particular thing. The discussion of understanding Western music through concepts, offered particularly by Tanner (1985) and Budd (1985), suggests that there are different levels of sophistication in understanding music from the recognition of music concepts, to hearing the structure, responding emotionally, and contextualizing the music. This range of considerations for understanding music raised by researchers writing from the Western art music perspective brings into question the assumption of the cultural specific researchers that the Western art music approach relies only on analysis using musical concepts to the exclusion of any notion of culture.

In the next chapter I will analyze the different perspectives and arguments on understanding so that in chapter 6 I can evaluate their adequacy for music education.
Chapter 4

Examination of the Perspectives on Understanding Music

Introduction

In this chapter, I return to the questions and issues raised in previous chapters, concerning both the Western art music perspective and the cross-cultural perspective, in more detail. Concerning the Western art music perspective, I look at:

1. how sounds are recognized as musical elements through descriptions and/or metaphor
2. the difference between internal and external understanding
3. concepts and our conceptual apparatus
4. musical expression and emotional experience
5. levels of sophistication of understanding

Considering the cross-cultural perspective I critically examine further the assumptions and arguments concerning the "inapplicability" of any notion of Western music understanding to the music of other cultures. I examine those issues raised by authors writing from the cultural specific position:

1. argument against Western beliefs
2. arguments against Western art music concepts
3. arguments against Western aesthetics and aesthetic language
Musical elements

Researchers writing from the Western perspective concern themselves firstly with how we understand music through hearing it "as music." This is at first concerned with explication of the difference between hearing sounds and hearing music. As Ridley (1993) has pointed out, the difference between hearing sounds and hearing music, is that we hear the sounds as music in a certain way:

The only change is in the way we hear what we hear, so that when we come to hear in a succession of sounds a rhythm rather than a racket, we come to understand those sounds as a rhythm, where before we had understood them as a racket, or perhaps had not understood them at all. (p. 590)

In the Western tradition hearing the difference between sounds and music is based on the recognition of the musical elements of melody, rhythm and harmony, the "building blocks" of Western art music. Of course there has been discussion in the literature of what type of description is best suited to the musical elements. Both Budd (1985) and Ridley (1993) consider such descriptions of the musical elements of rhythm: "A sequence of sounds and rests" (Budd, 1985, p.243), or "a succession of louder and quieter sounds" (Ridley, 1993, p.589), for example, as insufficient to distinguish rhythm from sounds. Budd attempts to give a better description of rhythm:
(i) it does not require that the sounds should be heard as differing in pitch, timbre, duration or loudness, and (ii) the sequence must be heard as grouping into units in which one element is heard as accented (prominent, salient) relative to the others. And the different rhythms are the different ways in which unaccented elements are heard as grouped in relation to an accented element. (p. 243)

Scruton (1983) relies on metaphor to distinguish sounds from music:

It seems that in our most basic apprehension of music there lies a complex system of metaphor, which is the true description of no material fact. And the metaphor cannot be eliminated from the description of music, because it is integral to the intentional object of musical experience. Take the metaphor away and you cease to describe the experience of music. (p. 85)

Thus his description of rhythm:

In hearing rhythm we hear the music as active; it seems to be doing something (namely dancing) which no sounds can do. (p. 90)

Scruton’s reliance on metaphor has been criticized as a tautological argument in that describing rhythm as dance presupposes that dance is made up of rhythm (Budd, 1985, p. 243). However his musical examples are excellent in showing that we often do use metaphors to describe musical sounds when we talk about music which leads Budd to conclude: "when sounds are experienced as music the experience possesses various sensational properties, and these properties are sometimes referred to by the use of metaphor" (p.245).

I believe that Scruton’s explanation helps to explain how we understand the sensational aspect of the music experience. The
sounds that make up music, for example, do not really physically "move," or become more "tense," but these are established descriptions of the type of experiences we have.

Another type of description is of the structure of the music or how the elements of rhythm and melody are organised into a musical form. In the first instance this means that the listener has to be able to recognize how music is organized into various sections. This involves being able to recognise and remember musical ideas when they return in the music or when they are manipulated by the composer. It involves being able to hear the music on a micro and macro level and hearing the music in terms of the standard musical forms (binary, ternary, rondo, sonata form), whether one has the terminology or not.

Other researchers, such as Davies (1994) and Levinson (1990a) have argued, in addition to understanding how a piece of music is put together, that understanding music be contextual. For example, in order to understand a particular symphony we must be able to compare it to other symphonies:

To hear the movement as symphonic is to compare it with a template of features applicable to other symphonies and drawn from them; to hear the movement as "sonataing" is to bring to bear on the music as it unfolds a general schema of sonata form, with which the music can be seem to comply more or less, though in its own individual, and sometimes temporarily deceptive, way. (Levinson, 1990a, p. 22)

Davies (1994, p.70) argues that this comparison to other works of its kind is not only necessary to recognize its form,
but crucial to a sophisticated understanding of the work in question. In comparing one symphony to another, the listener can determine what makes this symphony different from that, what difficulties of the form are presented to the composer and how s/he overcame them or failed to overcome them.

**Internal and external understanding**

This entire discussion of understanding music through understanding the musical elements (micro level) and how they are put together into musical form (macro level), and the necessity to understanding of comparing one musical form with another is consistent with the general nature of understanding as put forward by Martin (1970).

Martin discusses two different, though related, types of understanding which are very useful for a discussion of understanding music which she calls external and internal understanding. She defines internal and external understanding as follows:

There are in general two different sorts of connections that may be involved in understanding, depending on the way the thing is to be understood, X, is treated. On the one hand, X may be treated as a whole, a unity, and may be connected or related to something else, something apart from it: let us call connections of relations of this sort external. On the other hand, X may be taken in isolation—that is to say, without relating it to other things—treated as a composite, and parts or aspects of it may be connected or related; let us call connections or relations of this sort internal... Let us call the sort of understanding that takes something X as a unity and relates it to
something else as external understanding and let us call the sort of understanding that takes X as a composite, singles out parts or aspects of X, and discovers relationships internal understanding. (p.154)

According to Martin when we have an internal understanding of something, we understand it under some description in relation to itself and that there are various types of internal descriptions possible. She gives the example of a sonata, which can be understood internally in different ways; it can be understood in terms of its larger "parts" or "movements" and it can be understood in terms other smaller parts such as rhythm, melody, and harmony. Her point is that internal understanding of a sonata can vary from person to person according to the connections they hear and the descriptions that they have in mind. She states "It may be the case that the parts of a given thing are in fact related in more than one way- the movements of a sonata, for example, may be related temporally and tonally" (p. 154). Thus P1 could understand a sonata temporally, in terms of which movements, slow or fast, occurred in which order and which musical theme occurred at which points and when they were repeated. P2 could understand the same sonata tonally in terms of the key of the sonata and the various chord progressions throughout it.

According to Martin, when we have an external understanding of something, we classify the object of our understanding in relation to something else: we "understand something under some description as bearing some relation to something else which is
itself under some description" (p. 159). Within an external understanding of art, music or literature, Martin includes such factors as the life and times of the creator and the social conditions of the times. This means we can understand a sonata externally by not only comparing it to other sonatas, but also by situating it in the composer's life and times.

Other examples to show internal and external understanding are a novel and a painting. We can discuss the novel under a description of its internal parts, such as plot, character development, suspense, etc. We can also discuss the novel, externally in terms of how it compares to other novels, the historical period in which it was written, the novelist's life, etc. Another example is an impressionist painting; we can understand it internally in terms of the style of painting, the colours, the subject matter, but we can also relate the painting to others of its genre as well as to painting outside its genre.

Martin makes the point that external understanding often involves classifying either an object, person or idea. The skill we develop to classify a particular musical work as a sonata, for example means that we gain understanding of it once it has been put into a certain category. External understanding involves being able to categorize the object, person or idea in question.

In understanding by classifying, one's primary interest is in the way X fits in with other things and not in the parts of X as such at all. The redescription or classification does rest on them, and they may have to be invoked in justifying that classification;
furthermore, the classification itself may well bring to our attention parts of X hitherto unnoticed....If a person knows nothing about the impressionist movement, it will be of no avail to redescribe something he knows to be a painting as an impressionist work. (p.159)

It seems to me that Martin's notion of a distinction between internal understanding (considering a piece of music in relation to itself and/or its parts and subparts) and external understanding (considering a piece of music in relation to other pieces of the same type and other external factors such as information about the composer and his or her life and times) is useful and interesting in a discussion of understanding music, but can be an artificial distinction. There is certainly "give and take" between internal and external understanding of a piece of music. For example, Campbell (2000), has made use of the same terminology as Martin in his discussion of the music of J.S. Bach. How we determine the character and speed of his keyboard music, so that we understand how to perform it, depends on both the internal and external clues. Internally, we can listen to the choice of mode and the shape of the melody line to determine the character and speed of the music. Externally, we can play the melody and compare it to a vocal piece with a similar melody and examine the text to help determine the expression of the piece.

Can we understand music without concepts?

There is considerable confusion in the literature regarding this question based mostly in differing uses of the words
"elements" and "concepts." To this point, I have been consistent is my discussion of understanding music through recognition of "elements" of rhythm, harmony, melody and how we describe the difference between hearing sounds and hearing musical elements. But when we talk about musical concepts there are several points which need to be clarified. Musical concepts are simply a set of ideas differentiating music from sounds or noise; rhythm is an element, but it is also a concept. Musical concepts also distinguish musical elements from one another. For example, a rhythm is a musical element, but there are many subconcepts differentiating rhythm from melody (pitched versus unpitched sounds, tune) and one rhythm from another (pulse, metre, simple time, compound time). However in practice, simply teaching students to play a rhythm, or strum a series of chords on the autoharp, does not mean that they have developed concepts of rhythm or harmony or any subconcepts of rhythm or harmony (Gouzouasis, 1998). Gouzouasis makes a very important point about concepts; they are rooted in thought. When students have a concept of harmony, or rhythm, rather than just playing what the teacher asks them to play without understanding what they are doing, they acquire "a knowledge framework they themselves actively constructed" (p. 9). They can then apply the concepts they have learned to other songs, so that, for example, they can accompany other melodies on the autoharp according to the concepts of harmony they have developed.
There is another important point about concepts for understanding music which I will discuss here. We can have a concept or an "idea" of an apple, a bed, or a rhythm without having a formalized definition of the object or even a term for the object. We may think and hear music through musical concepts we have gained by experience without having the specific musical terminology or definitions. Thus when we say a person (P) has a concept of rhythm, the meaning is ambiguous. We can mean:

1. P possesses the ability to recognize rhythm in music, but does not know it is called "rhythm." P may also be able to recognize, but not name the subconcepts of rhythm. P may be able to describe rhythm and the subconcepts of rhythm in his or her own words.

2. P can name and recognize the concepts and or sub-concepts of rhythm.

3. As Budd (1985) points out P may possess the concept necessary for recognizing rhythm, but fail to do so:

The possession of a concept that applies to musical events is not the same as the ability to classify musical events on the basis of their sounds by using the concept: someone can possess a musical concept and yet be quite unable to apply the concept to music as he listens to the music. (p. 246)

For education this distinction between having concepts and not being able to name them and having concepts and being able to name them is important. I have previously written about what I called "an intuitive/organic conceptual apparatus." (Zenker,
which helps to explain how we develop concepts. The term "conceptual apparatus," often used by philosophers, is sometimes a place holder or a metaphor for a person's system of concepts which we already have in place or which we acquire.

In discovering our musical conceptual apparatuses, we can distinguish two extremes of a continuum: an intuitive/organic apparatus and a reflective apparatus. An intuitive/organic conceptual apparatus evolves from a person experiencing and getting used to a certain genre of music from an early age. For example, a person brought up in North America may unintentionally develop a framework of categories into which s/he can fit the music of the day (or even the musics of the day) based in his/her experience of listening to Western music(s). This person may or may not be aware of this framework, or the use s/he makes of it in listening to music. This organic apparatus will determine what sounds "normal" and what sounds "odd" and in the absence of education or training, will also have significant impact on what the person likes or dislikes. By studying, teaching, modelling, etc., this unreflective apparatus can be modified- it can become more complex, sophisticated and varied. Having a reflective conceptual apparatus means that a person has developed a conceptual apparatus different from the (intuitive) organic one which s/he previously possessed. (p.40)

To teach for understanding we can make students aware of the concepts (ideas or general notions) they already posses and raise them to a reflective level. We can teach students the appropriate musical terminology for the concepts they possess so that they can demonstrate that they understand by giving the correct music terminology for sounds which they hear. It is also possible that a person needs a more sophisticated vocabulary to come to a more sophisticated understanding of music.

It is important to recognize however, as with my description
of an intuitive/organic apparatus, not all the ways in which we understand music have to do with concepts as Budd (1995), Levinson (1990), Ryle (1959), and Kivy (1990) have explained.

According to Ryle’s (1959) notion of perception recipes (which includes sight recipes, sound recipes, and feel recipes), through our experiences we develop perceptions of common objects or sounds that involve more than mere sensory input, but do not involve concepts.

To say that someone caught a glimpse, or heard a sound, is already to say more than would be involved in barely describing his visual and auditory sensations, for it is already to range what he is attending to fairly general perception recipes. (p.219)

In the case of music, Ryle provides the example of a tune. We understand a tune we have heard before, without concepts, but through thinking in the sense of "following the tune" according to the "recipe of the tune" which we have acquired through hearing it repeatedly:

In short, he is now recognising or following the tune, if, knowing how it goes, he is now using that knowledge; and he uses that knowledge not just by hearing the tune, but hearing it is a special frame of mind, the frame of mind of being ready to hear both what he is not hearing and what he will hear, or would be about to hear, if the pianist continues playing it and is playing it correctly. He knows how it goes and he now hears the notes as the progress of that tune, He hears them according the recipe of the tune, in the sense that what he hears is what he is listening for. (p. 226)
Levinson (1990) agrees that we can understand a piece of music by "hearing it in an appropriate way" and that this relevant background knowledge we need to do so is largely "tacit" and "intuitive:"

A musically literate listener in the sense under consideration- that is, listening literacy- need never have digested a formal definition of concerto or a fugue, need never have grasped the least fundamental of harmonic theory, need not know how many octaves and fractions thereof each orchestral instrument spans, need not be able to tick off the characteristics of Baroque style. He need only have an implicit grasp of things- in his bones and ears, so to speak. His literacy ultimately in a set of experientially induced, context-sensitive dispositions to respond appropriately to musical events in specific settings, and not in terms of recoverable information in a mental dictionary of musical matters. (p. 24-25)

Budd (1995) supports Levinson that we understand a lot about what is "going on" in the music without concepts:

It is often not required that someone should recognize something as an instance of a certain concept under which it falls, or even that he should possess the concept, if he is to be aware of that phenomenon in a work of art and understand its role within the work. (Budd, 1995, p. 246)

Kivy (1990, chap. 6) writes that we develop "perceptions" of "rightness" or "wrongness" in music through our listening experiences. According to Kivy we also have an "innate" ability to describe music in our own words, without a formalized musical vocabulary, although we may have difficulty with verbalizing these "internal" descriptions.
To conclude this section, we do not need concepts to understand music in the sense of "knowing how to follow" the music. However, although we may be unaware of it, we may initially develop concepts, often without explicit musical words, by experiencing the music we hear around us in our particular culture. Important for education is to make students aware of their "perception recipes" or their "intuitive/organic apparatuses," which we can consider to be different terms for the same thing, to prepare them for more sophisticated levels of understanding.

Understanding music: expression, emotions, and "being moved"

No account of understanding music would be complete without a discussion of the concepts of expression, emotions and "being moved" by music and their role in understanding music. This topic is indeed a thesis topic in itself, but within this thesis represents one aspect of the range of considerations for understanding I am developing.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music defines expression as, "That part of a composer's music which he has no full means of committing to paper and must therefore leave largely to the artistic perception of the performer" (p. 188). The definition continues on to point out that the composer can use various terms which suggest the speed of the music (largo, vivace), and spirit to be expressed (giocoso, con espressione, tranquillo). The
composer can also use signs such as dynamics, phrase markings, staccatos, and accentuation, all of which are called the expressive elements of the music. Generally, as a trained musician, working on the "expression" in a piece of music means getting "beyond the notes" and "playing with feeling," paying attention to the dynamics and all other expressive markings and incorporating them into the performance. What the music expresses through the performer are "emotional qualities and qualities of human personality such as sadness, nobility, aggressiveness, tenderness and serenity" (Robinson, 1994, p. 13).

There is a great body of literature which addresses the question of whether we attribute expressive qualities to music based on conventional interpretations of musical sounds such as melodic contour, rhythmic movement and harmonic structure in combination with the expressive elements listed above, or if we attribute expressive qualities to music because it affects us emotionally (Robinson, 1994). Goldman (1995) explains:

The main debate here pits communication or arousal theorists, who hold that music is sad, joyful, or angry by communicating or arousing like states in listeners, against cognitivists, who claim that we recognize analogues of these states in music without feeling them ourselves while listening....I am suggesting that both theories of the nature of musical expression are compatible and equally believable. It is furthermore likely that recognition and arousal of emotional states interact and reinforce one another in listening to music. We might be affected emotionally by the recognition of some structural features of natural expression in music, and we begin to feel their effects. (p. 55)
Goldman (1995) argues for a reconciliation between the two positions as does Robinson (1997). This is a debate which I cannot resolve in this thesis, except to assume that expressive qualities are often attributed to musical performances, and that we as listeners are often emotionally affected by what we hear. Whichever perspective on music and emotion we may accept, the implication is that understanding per se, is linked to a recognition of the expressive elements in music. I agree with Ridley (1993) that one cannot understand the structure of a piece of music without at the same time understanding the expressive elements. Ridley concludes that:

...to understand music is to be able to hear it in a certain way-is to have unfolding experiences or [sic] the performance permits; that among the perceptual properties of the experiences are the "purely musical" and the expressive (though properly, of course, both are musical, for both are properties of musical experiences, and some music cannot be understood unless the experience of it has expressive perceptual properties); and that these properties may combine with and modify one another, in the ways that I have described, to yield unfolding experiences of great complexity and variety. (p.596)

Important for the role that expression plays in understanding music is the difference between recognizing what the expressive qualities of a piece of music are without "being moved," and "being moved" by the music. There are two important questions regarding expression in music for understanding:

1. Can you understand music on any level and not be moved?
2. Can you be moved by the music and not understand?
In the first case, it seems obvious that a person could hear a simple rhythm, tapped on a table for example, and not be moved by it, but simply understand it as a rhythm. It is also possible to know that a piece of music is sad, without feeling sad. We can understand both the structure and the expressive details of a piece of music on a more or less sophisticated level without being emotionally involved ourselves. For example, I can listen to Mozart's Requiem realizing that it is a characteristically tragic piece, a Mass for the dead which Mozart failed to complete before he died himself, but not feel sad. The point is that part of understanding music is being aware of the expressive elements of a particular piece of music, even if we are not emotionally moved by the music ourselves.

In the second case, I will first examine a little more closely being "moved" by the music as an emotional response. According to Daniels (1975) in his discussion of the logic of emotions, "we don't do emotions: they 'come over us' or we 'are gripped' by them" (p.27). The category of emotions carries with it a presupposition about a person's normal state; if they are emotional, their normal state has been altered in some way and in the case of listening to music their emotional state has been altered by the music; s/he has been moved by it. It also seems clear that people can be moved by music in degrees; sometimes we are not moved as deeply as we are at other times. For an account of music understanding we need to distinguish between people who
are moved by music, but can offer no reason why, and people who
are moved by music and have reasons why they are moved.

For example, person one (P1), who is a novice about music,
listens to the music and hears it, but has only a superficial
emotional response to the music. P1 can only say that he likes
the music or not and although he may be moved by it, he may not
understand why he is moved. Person two (P2), however, has a
sophisticated knowledge of music, listens to the music and hears
it, has the conceptual apparatus in place which allows her to
have reasons for why she is moved, to discuss what elements
internal and external to the piece of music move her and to
detail how it moves her, i.e., she understands the music. We can
therefore agree with Davies (1994) and Tanner (1985) below that
"giving oneself over to the music," does not constitute an
understanding of it. Simply "being moved" without having reasons
why is neither necessary nor sufficient to say one understands:

It also seems to be widely held that understanding
comes simply as a result of one’s giving oneself over
to the music (as if there was something wrong with a
work if it does not appeal at first hearing). The idea
that there are worthwhile degrees of musical
understanding which might be attained only through
years of hard work, and that there are kinds of music
which yield their richest rewards only to listeners so
prepared, smacks of intellectual elitism which has
become unacceptable, not only in society at large, but
in the universities. Nevertheless, the arguments I have
developed above suggest to me that many music lovers
are mistaken in equating the enjoyment they experience
with the pleasure afforded by the deeper levels of
understanding. (Davies 1994, p.80)
Simply to report that one found it a very powerful piece, even a very powerful tragic piece, but to be able to say nothing about it, not only means that one can’t say anything helpful to anyone else, but also shows that, however imposing the impact may have been, one has no more understood it than one has understood a mountain at which one may have gazed with awe. (Tanner 1985, p.219)

"Being moved" by music also involves important cultural considerations. Various cultures may develop different types of emotional expression which may also vary from genre to genre of music within that culture. The interesting point is that although interpretation of expression in music may be culturally conditioned, it is not necessarily relative in the sense that certain types of expression are only found in certain cultures. It would seem that most cultures have characteristically happy or sad music and that we can learn to recognize this expression in the music of another culture.

There are also numerous relations between hearers and what they hear in terms of their personal experiences and how these influence the degree to which a person is moved by the music (Sparshott, 1994). For example P1 may find a piece of music sadder, not necessarily by understanding it more, but by relating it to a personal experience that P2 may have not experienced in his/her life.

By growing up in a certain culture you recognize the expressive qualities of a certain type of music, but the depth of emotion you experience may be further influenced not only by how well you understand the music, but also by your life experiences.
(Ahlenberg, 1999, has written about this in more detail), and your "mood and reactive feelings towards events, things, and people" (Sparshott, 1994, p. 24).

There is one final point that needs to be elaborated on. That is the difference between understanding music and liking music.\(^{11}\) When people talk about music they often exclaim: "I love that song," or "I hate that new song on the radio," based on their emotional reaction to the music. The person may or may not be able to explain why s/he likes it, beyond a subjective or purely emotional explanation, and may or may not be able to explain why the music should be liked. This suggests, on the one hand, that the person may understand the music only on a very basic level, or may not understand it at all. On the other hand, a person can acquire a sophisticated understanding of a piece of music and not like it at all, or like it to a great degree. "Liking" or "disliking" the music is something which may happen in conjunction with understanding the music, but liking the music is not a necessary or sufficient condition for understanding it. Reimer (1989) makes this point:

The way to share art's power is to aesthetically experience it- not to taste it to find out whether it pleases the palate. Yet it is this latter, superficial kind of experience which teachers actively promote when they constantly ask "Did you like this song?" "Did you like this painting?" "Did you like this poem?" As if it mattered! What matters is, "Did you hear what happened

\(^{11}\) I take up the discussion of "liking" again, in relation to appreciating and understanding, in chapter 5.
in this song and did you feel what you heard?" "Did you see more in this painting and did you feel more of what you saw?" "Did you grasp more of the subtleties of this poem and did you feel more subtly as a result?" In the sense of perceiving more and reacting more, the central question is "Did you understand?" (p.115)

However, from a pedagogical perspective "liking" music may be a good starting point to develop an interest in a student in why s/he likes it, which in turn may lead to an interest in learning to understand the music.

**Levels of understanding**

The discussion of understanding music to this point including elements, concepts, expression and emotion, internal/external understanding, intuitive/organic and reflective conceptual apparatuses, and perception recipes, suggests that there is a variety of considerations involved in understanding music and that different levels of understanding are possible. As we saw in chapter 2, Budd (1985) and Tanner (1985), have described levels and types of understanding music, based on the notion that understanding music, like understanding many other things, is a matter of degree (Tanner 1985). Reimer (1996) has also suggested that "understanding exists on a continuum of possibilities" (p. 84). Davies (1994) writes that "an understanding and appreciation of music, like understanding in general, can be both partial and a matter of degree" (p. 378).

As I outlined in chapter 1, understanding can be equated with comprehension, but it can also mean more than comprehension:
reflection and analysis, and profound realization of the significance of something. It is difficult to outline what exactly various degrees of sophistication of understanding may include, but it is clear, as I also discussed in chapter 1, that beyond the level at which understanding is associated with comprehension, the more sophisticated the understanding, the more considerations which are necessary to be taken into account.

We can see the increasing number of considerations taken into account in Tanner's (1985) levels of understanding, which I will provide here again for easy reference.

Level one is a matter of sensing the nature of the thematic material....Understanding music at this basic level consists in the ability to follow how the themes in the music unfold, to be able to hear the basic structure of the music....Level 2 is the level at which one begins to explain how the music works by talking of modulations, inversions, counterpoints and the rest....This level moves beyond level one in that it explains how the music is written and what changes are made so the themes and structure of the music unfold as they do....Level 3 takes us from the realm of the technical- which naturally involves a certain amount of theory- into that of the explicitly theoretical. (p. 230)

This third level involves reconciling what Tanner calls the "background" and "foreground" of the music.

The background consists of the common stock of rules and idioms in which the music of the time is written, and is presupposed by the piece which will inevitably employ these rules extensively. The foreground is what

---

12 I discuss the task use of understanding, which for music, means musical performance and its relationship to understanding music, in the next chapter.
the piece actually consists in (1985, p.230). A full understanding of such a piece will involve seeing what the precise balance of background and foreground is, and in exploring the relationship between the two. (p.231)

It seems that Tanner’s Level 1 is the same as the comprehension sense of understanding music, "following the music," which is also similar to Ryle’s (1959) notion of perception (sound) recipes. According to Tanner’s levels, as our understanding becomes more sophisticated, we become aware of the "foreground" (internal) and the "background" (external) elements of the music.

Of course this notion of levels, is just one possible description of how understanding becomes more sophisticated. Budd (1985), if you recall from chapter 1, proposes that a person’s sophistication of understanding can be assessed under four different dimensions.

Someone’s understanding of a musical work can be said to be superficial if although he can follow a performance of the work without feeling lost, he fails to hear much of the significant detail or structure of the work. His understanding of a musical work can be said to be inaccurate (or imprecise) if, although he can follow a performance of a work well, he has mistaken (or only a rather indefinite) conception of how the music should sound, and so how it should be performed. The third category of understanding is this: someone’s understanding of music can be said to be narrow if it covers few kinds of styles of music, either in the sense that he is not able to follow most forms of music or in the sense that he is not able to appreciate most forms of music i.e., to see what value there is in them. Finally, someone’s understanding of music can be said to be primitive if he can respond only to the simplest musical relations and structures. (1985, p.234)
When we talk about understanding something, in normal language usage, we talk about all sorts of understanding: "initial," "limited," "shallow," "better" and "more sophisticated" understanding. These different types and levels of understanding are certainly possible in understanding music.

Cross-cultural Perspective

Argument against Western beliefs

There are many problems and contradictions with Walker’s (1990) effort to negate the use of Western beliefs in understanding music cross-culturally. The first is that Walker is talking only about Western art music and its associated beliefs, concepts and criteria. They are not the same beliefs that may apply to other types of music which developed in the West, influenced mostly by African music, and are considered part of our Western culture: jazz, folk, blues, country, pop, and rock. Clearly, our Western beliefs may include the influence of musics other than classical. Walker has explicated Western art music beliefs and this is surely important to understanding Western art music.

However, Walker’s focus on cultural systems leads to the second problem with his argument that music is "culture bound" and that we cannot use Western beliefs and concepts to help us understand the music of other cultures. There is an underlying
premise in Walker's argument that is clearly flawed: only musical "truisms" can be universalised. He believes that since he has proven that our Western beliefs are "false," that is, because some of our Western art music beliefs are based in the science and theorizing of other time periods, that they cannot be universalized. But the fact remains, for example, that in our modern Western tuning system, musical intervals of the "perfect" fourth and fifth are not mathematically perfect, or "true" in Walker's language, yet we still call them "perfect." We still carry on with the musical language we have inherited because it has simply become part of our belief system. Because we know that a "perfect" fifth is not mathematically perfect, we do not hear it any differently. It is just a name for a particular distance between two pitches which we have been trained to hear. Walker argues that since our beliefs are not "true," they are not applicable to other musics. If we heard "Western intervals" in the music of other cultures we would not deny that we are hearing them because we know that they are not "true." There is nothing wrong with using Western terminology if we hear a lot of perfect fifths in the music of another culture and this helps us figure out how the music is organized. I do not believe we can assert that by using one aspect of Western musical beliefs to understand the music of another culture that we are assuming that its music is the same as ours and that we bring our entire belief system to bear on the music.
Thus Walker's argument against Western beliefs is based on two main incorrect premises:

1. When we are talking about pitch we are talking about Western art music pitch and that no other types of music which developed in the West, such as jazz, country, popular music and rock and roll or the music of other cultures involve the use of the word "pitch."

2. We cannot be concerned with "abstract" sounds that make up the musical event, rather we must be concerned only with musical cultures, their musical beliefs, and why they choose the sounds they do (Walker 1990).

However, we can and do use descriptions of abstract sounds, such as pitch and rhythm, to understand the music of other cultures and we can also learn about the musical beliefs of that culture as we do so.

**Argument against Western art music concepts**

What sense can we make of the argument that we cannot universalize any Western art music concepts simply because they are Western? This argument seems to be tied to a formalistic interpretation of the Western aesthetic: that the meaning of the music is in the music elements of harmony, rhythm and melody and that if we teach the music of other cultures using these elements we are somehow endowing them with Western meanings. Most importantly, this argument ignores that there are other Western
musics, such as jazz, rock and roll, popular music, which have long adopted Western concepts, elements, and notation.

With regard to the music of other cultures, it seems quite illogical to assume that using the concept of rhythm to understand an African drum beat means that we have now "Beethovenized" or assumed that it must follow a certain classical pattern or that the rhythm now has a certain "meaning." Another obvious objection to the argument is that we do use "rhythm" when we are talking about divisions and subdivisions of African drum beats.

Also, the second part of the argument— that because Western melody, harmony, and rhythm were too restrictive to include even all the music of the Western art music tradition, so that they are of no use to understanding the music of other cultures— does not make sense. If one looks at a musical score by either Stockhausen or Schafer, one sees the free interpretation and manipulation of the traditional elements of music, as evidenced by traditional notation, mixed with "symbolic graphics." The composers simply adapted and manipulated traditional ways of writing Western art music to suit their purposes. Further to this, Western music outside of the Western art music tradition uses Western art music notation with its own additions. In rock music written for guitar, notation for "screeches" and "bends" is simply layered "on top of" traditional notation (P. Gouzouasis (personal communication, November 30, 1999)).
The argument that Western art music concepts and Western art music notation and adaptations of Western notation are not useful in mapping out the organization of the music of another culture just does not make sense. Notation can be important to understanding how music is organized. It would seem that any notation we can adapt or invent to write down the music of other cultures only helps us to understand the music.

Argument against Western aesthetics and aesthetic language

In this section I address the arguments outlined in the previous chapter, in a different format than I have used in previous sections. I provide a schematic of each argument and I then outline why I believe each premise is false and why the conclusions are also false.

1. The period specific argument can be outlined as follows:
   a) Any notion of "aesthetics" is based in Western aesthetic theory of the 18th and 19th centuries.
   b) Theories are time-specific.
   c) Therefore "aesthetics" is time-specific.

The first premise is not true because we have no reason to believe aesthetic language is the same as aesthetic theory. If we hold that in the Middle Ages, during the time of invention of Gregorian chant, a fully-developed aesthetic theory did not yet exist, we cannot say that there was no use of aesthetic language including such words as "beauty" and "harmonious." At least some
parts of this aesthetic language no doubt existed long before it was codified into current aesthetic theory.

Yet, researchers such as Bowman (1993), Walker (1990), and Elliott (1995) have continued to be concerned with aesthetic theory and have forgotten that it is not the same as aesthetic language. For example, the average person in the West makes aesthetic judgements and uses aesthetic language perhaps without being aware of, or even having, an explicit aesthetic theory. Why then do researchers continue to focus on the uselessness of Western aesthetic theory outside of the West, instead of looking at what kind of aesthetic language commonly exists in Western and other cultures? In the literature, approaching music aesthetically is often viewed as being "biased" to a Western perspective. Just because a culture does not possess Western aesthetic theory, it does not follow that it has no concept of the aesthetic.

The second premise, that theories are period-specific, is not true because it does not matter when a theory is invented (in this case the 18th and 19th centuries); it may or may not be universal no matter when it is invented.

We have no reason to believe that all notions of the "aesthetic" must be tied to 18th and 19th century Western aesthetic theory or that aesthetic considerations exist in only one time period.

2. The argument that any notion of value we have in music is
based in the Western aesthetic theory can be outlined as follows:

a) Value in music rests in aesthetic contemplation.

b) Aesthetic contemplation is only possible in relation to 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory.

c) Therefore, value in music rests in 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory.

The premise that only music which sustains a high degree of contemplation is aesthetically valuable is false, because it is tied exclusively to a particular interpretation of 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory. This interpretation of 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory does not assign value to the music based on performance, social context, and improvisational or ceremonial aspects of music. In essence those researchers who argue that the music of other cultures can have no notion of the aesthetic value are basing their arguments on a narrow view of aesthetic theory and aesthetics in general.

The second premise is false, because as I outlined above, we have no reason to believe that some people of other time periods and other cultures did not contemplate their music aesthetically.

While it is clear that music written in time periods other than 18th and 19th century Europe are musically valuable, we need to consider that perhaps we cannot extend our Western art music notion of what is either "good," "great" or artistic to the music of other cultures. Coming to understand the music of another culture through our concepts or their concepts is one thing, but
judging the music of another culture according to our standards
is another. Our Western art music concepts regarding the
structure of music may be transferrable to understand the music
of another culture; our standards for judging our own music,
however, are unlikely to be applicable to theirs.

If we accept that each culture does give meaning to its
music, spiritual or otherwise, and has its own standards of
goodness, we must find a way to assign value to all music while
including those performance, social context, improvisational and
ceremonial, roles unique to each. Bowman (1993) is really
concerned that in music education we retain our focus on musical
value and makes the suggestion: "Perhaps there is no harm in
retaining the word "aesthetic" as the generic label for the
various bases upon which we draw in making judgements of worth
within various musical genres" (p.24).

Here we face a choice of discarding the notion of aesthetic
value because on a narrow interpretation it eliminates many
musics as unmusical and unartistic, partly because people who
engage in and appreciate such music may not have a thoughtful
aesthetic theory, and yet we want to include the concept of the
aesthetic within a pluralistic view of music education because it
traditionally represents value. We need only recognize that
"aesthetic" can encompass a large (probably unlimited) view of
what is good in music. To do otherwise is to misunderstand the
complex and admittedly vague, category of the aesthetic.
Perhaps we should consider using the philosophical
distinction between judgement from a point of view contrasted
with judgement of a kind. In the first case we would consider the
value of music or all musical sounds from a Western point of
view, or any point of view we choose. In judging music or musical
sounds as being good of a kind, the music would be judged
according to the standards for that culture.

There are five possibilities when considering the question
of standards across music of different cultures:

a. There are none.
b. They exist and are relative to each culture.
c. They exist for each genre of music in each culture.
d. They exist and are universal standards for all music.
e. There are standards which, while not "universal" in that
not all music should meet them, are widely useful in examining
aesthetic merit across widely divergent musical communities.

Unfortunately, it is outside the scope of this paper to
consider all these possibilities.

3. The theory-specific argument that we cannot consider
"aesthetically" the "functional" music of other cultures, but
only music composed for its own sake as an "artform" can be
outlined as follows:

a) Aesthetic experience is only derived from contemplative
thought (Reimer, 1996, p. 61).

b) Aesthetics only focuses on the music itself (Swanwick,
c) Aesthetics is "one coherent body of theory which in spite of "countless variations," has "remained largely intact" since the eighteenth century (Elliott, 1995, p. 26, quoted in Koopman 1998, p. 6).

d) Therefore "aesthetics" cannot escape from 18th and 19th century aesthetic theory.

I believe the first premise is false, because as Reimer (1996) has argued, music education as aesthetic education is "notably inclusive of all the ways that people engage themselves with music-listening, performing, improvising, composing, judging, analyzing, describing and understanding contexts and relations to other arts and other aspects of culture" (p.62). He argues that having an aesthetic experience involves all these relevant factors and that we cannot separate understanding the process from understanding the product.

The second premise is false, because as Swanwick (1999) argues, an aesthetic perspective includes all sorts of factors that relate to the musical experience, including our individual experiences.

The third premise is false, because as Koopman (1998) argues, there have been many aesthetic theories postulated since 18th and 19th century European aesthetic theory.

The fact that the music of a certain culture is not held up as an "artform" but used for ceremony should not make it beneath
aesthetic considerations, such as its value for that society, its
goodness or badness according to the standards for that society,
or the emotional effect it has on the listeners/participants.

At a deeper level, we must realize that the notion of an
aesthetic is a second order concept, concerned not with musical
act, but with talk about it. It is possible that other cultures
use aesthetic language in talk about their music, even if this
talk is not realized by the culture in question as being
aesthetic talk.

Summary

In this section on the cross-cultural perspective I have
attempted to sort out some very difficult issues regarding
understanding music cross-culturally. I have examined some of the
relationships and interrelationships of Western beliefs, Western
concepts, Western aesthetic theory and aesthetic language. The
point is that, because we live in the West, researchers who
attempt to argue for the relative cultural specific view of
understanding music begin by attempting to argue that how we
understand Western art music is based exclusively in Western
culture. However, arguments for a particularistic understanding
of Western music based in Western culture neither prove that the
way we understand music in the West is distinctively Western nor
prove that there are no universal characteristics based in the
music of all cultures. Rather, my analysis of the arguments shows
that the range of considerations involved in understanding Western art music are not distinctively held by Western art music. There are concepts and aesthetic considerations which are logically applicable across cultures. In addition, I argue in the next chapter that understanding music is the basis of, and may imply, appreciating music, a process which may involve aesthetic considerations.

The Gap and the Bridge: Towards Generic Concepts

There seems to be a considerable gap in the literature between the Western art music perspective of understanding music and the cross-cultural perspective. Of the authors I have included who write from the Western art music perspective, their focus is on pre-20th century art music. Consequently, the musical examples which they include in their arguments are of music written prior to the 20th century. Researchers writing from the cross-cultural music perspective, with the exception of Swanwick (1988a), write mostly about the music of non-Western cultures. Neither perspective considers, in any great detail, "the bridge" of the 20th century when Western art music became influenced to a great extent by the music of other cultures, and other forms of Western music such as rock and roll, jazz and blues, popular music which developed as a fusion of African and European music. And it is clear, as argued by Pubini (1990), that Western art music has been influenced by non-western cultures:
Ever since the age of polyphony the whole of the Western musical tradition has been based on the interval rather than on rhythm: indeed the latter feature has always been considered of lesser importance compared with the role played by harmony in the musical whole. Rhythm, or rather rhythm as a sense of time that gives music its structure, has become the most important feature in twentieth-century music, and this development is due in no small part to the influence that non-European music has exerted upon it. (p. 505)

Swanwick (1998b) has also argued for an "autonomy" of cultural products and sounds as evidenced by the "transformation and reinterpretation" of various genres of music across cultures:

Recently in my travels, I came across a Papuan pop song which utilizes most of the ostinato from Pachabel's Canon as a repeated bass and chord progression; not the first time that this serviceable progression has been put to work since its origins in seventeenth-century Nuremberg. This musical traffic does not only run from west to east or north to south; not does it only flow from 'classical' traditions to 'folk'. The drift is in all directions, unstoppable. Western 'symphonic' music (for want of a better term) has always absorbed elements from elsewhere like a great sonorous sponge. Haydn absorbed Slavonic turns of phrase; Debussy was impressed by the 'Cakewalk'; Stravinsky copied 'Ragtime'; Puccini did his homework on ancient Chinese turns for Turandot; Vaughan Williams soaked up model folk melodies from rural Britain; at some point. 'Moorish' dances became Morris dancing, hence the exotic costumes. (p.110)

Davies (1994), writing mainly from the Western art music perspective, also believes, however, that the cultural "gap" has been bridged by the "cross-fertilization" of musical styles through their multidimensional transmission. He writes:

Within the dominant Western culture, many listeners,
performers, and composers move with ease between different styles or kinds of music—between jazz (traditional, bebop, modern, new wave), rhythm and blues (one style or two?), "classical" (covering mediaeval, renaissance, baroque, classical, romantic, impressionist, expressionist, serial, and so forth), country and western (one style or two?), folk, mainstream popular, church (hymns, incantation, chant), and so on. One or more of these styles has been married to the music local to another culture to produce a hybrid—for example, High Life in Africa, Kronchong in Indonesia, and Pacific island styles of church and popular music. The direction of cultural transmission is not always one-way. Popular music is North America finds its roots not only in Europe but also in Africa. So rich is the cross-fertilization between musical styles and so compelling are the results sometimes produced by the movement toward authentic performance of the music of earlier eras that I am inclined to believe that the cultural and historical barriers separating the musics of the world are superable.

(p. 328)

It was also in the 20th century that ethnomusicology became an accepted field of inquiry, which differs in an important way from traditional musicology. Musicologists focus on the study of music in one culture, usually their own (Merriam, 1964, p. 17) whereas ethnomusicologists focus on the music of many cultures, usually not their own. Ethnomusicologists raised many questions about how to understand the music of other cultures so different than our own and this led to much scepticism about our Western approach to understanding music. Again Fubini comments (1990):

And it is no coincidence that this sense of crisis in the Western musical tradition is accompanied by growing scepticism about the validity of the very concept of a musical work of art as it has generally been understood in the West. (p. 505)

And Fubini is supported by Stubley (1992):
Indeed, the concept of scale has been so central to Western musical thought that its validity as a universal construct has only recently come to be questioned through the work of ethnomusicologists and cognitive psychologists. (p. 5)

However the "bridge" of the 20th century has represented the perfect opportunity to observe the impact the non-Western music has had on Western music and as well, because of the work of the ethnomusicologists, to see what similarities exist among music of different cultures. Indeed, if Western and non-Western music were so different the concept of bimusicality would be impossible as well as any possible fusion between/among/within different genres of different cultures such as jazz and its Afro-western fusion, Greek/Turkish music and its western/eastern fusion. Rather than identifying problems with understanding the music of other cultures, the 20th century offered solutions to "bridging the gap" of understanding Western and non-Western art music.

Instead, Western art music researchers have suggested that Western music understanding may not be valid for the music of other cultures. It is as if, because the Western art music perspective may not include all the ways that we can and should understand music, the whole system is made invalid and no elements of it can be used to understand the music of other cultures. And the writers from the cultural specific perspective have picked up on the same argument but in a slightly different form. Since Western art music had a system in place to understand itself which supposedly does not include aspects of music
understanding important to the music of other cultures, all aspects of the former are invalid.

However, there is little reason to assume that Western art music concepts of rhythm, harmony, melody, structure of music (form), are not sometimes helpful in understanding some music of other cultures. The questions about using Western concepts to understand music cross-culturally is not if you "can or cannot" use them but if it makes sense to do so. Western art music terms are pragmatically sensible for understanding music cross-culturally, because, for example, we can recognise "rhythm" in the music of another culture, even if we hear a rhythmic pattern not found in Western art music. We can expand our existing Western conceptual repertoire to include new phenomena. Along with melody, harmony and rhythm, we can include other "base properties" or generic concepts to understand the music of other cultures, as discussed in the literature, such as: "how does [the music] move ahead in time? How does it achieve unity-variety, tension release, expectation delay-resolution, climax, transition, balance, focus, continuity?" (Schwadron, 1984, p.11).

Although the phrase "generic concepts" is usually used in relation to the elements/structure of music, any concepts we accept to study music cross-culturally such as, aesthetic valuing, artistic valuing, performance, could be considered generic concepts.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed the fundamental arguments concerning understanding music from the Western art music perspective (that there are different considerations involved in understanding music and different levels of sophistication of understanding), and cultural specific perspective (that the Western considerations involved in understanding music are distinctively Western). I have argued that the arguments which deny the relevance of all aspects of the Western "beliefs," "concepts," and aesthetics to understanding the music of other cultures rest on false premises. I have also argued that the way we approach Western art music may not be as far removed from understanding the music of other cultures as it may seem.

In light of my analyses to this point, in the next chapter I discuss several important considerations involved in or related to understanding music, which to this point have not been discussed, at least not in any great detail and I present a range of factors involved in understanding music cross-culturally.
Chapter 5

Range of Factors Involved in Understanding Music Cross-culturally

Introduction

Based upon my analysis of understanding music from the Western art music and cross-cultural music perspectives, in this chapter I present a range of factors involved in understanding music cross-culturally. However, I first discuss important considerations involved in or related to understanding which I believe require further clarification: cultural aspects, performance, listening, audiating, hearing, our conceptual apparatus continuum, and appreciation.

Cultural Aspects

I have argued that understanding cultural aspects of music is only one part of the multi-dimensional concept of understanding. We can distinguish two main cultural aspects involved in understanding music cross-culturally.

The first is the genre/cultural aspect. All music comes from a tradition and, historically speaking, genres stress or develop musical structures which differ from other musical structures. It is also the case that a genre may incorporate customary ways of expressing particular emotions and that cultures develop one or more genres that are unique to that culture. An adequate education for music understanding will need to include
genre/cultural elements as follows:

1. individual styles
2. ethnic/cultural style
3. types of structures, patterns and elements within music of various cultures
4. mixed types made up of any/all of the above including cross-over among differing cultural styles

When considering the genre/cultural aspect of music one may notice similarities and differences between and among cultural styles. Green (1966) makes a good point with regard to coming to an understanding of cross-cultural behaviour, the logic of which I think is relevant to this notion of a genre/cultural aspect.

When behaviour becomes principled, i.e., when it becomes norm-regarding, then it is possible to entertain the prospect that there may be alternative ways of doing the same thing or alternative norms to govern the same social action. And this is so because to grasp the principles embodied in one's behaviour is to have the critical acumen to see in what respects "circumstances differ" and to understand what different kinds of behaviour may count as "doing the same thing." Although they do not describe it in precisely these terms, such a capacity is an example of what anthropologists have pointed to as "cultural empathy." (p. 129-130)

When we try to interpret different genres of music cross-culturally, we must recognize that there is more than "one way of doing the same thing," especially when it comes to expression in music. Music from entirely different genres can express the same emotion in either similar or different ways, both of which are
legitimate according to cultural norms. For example, Becker (1986) has described the "weeping" pitches of the Kaluli people. These four descending pitches imitate the song of the "muni" bird and are the core pitches of "gisalo" songs which can be used for funerals. This type of descending pitch structure is also very commonly (although not exclusively) accepted to signify sadness in the Western art music tradition.

Also within a particular genre of music, musical structure and expressive content may change through time. For example, in the Western classical music tradition, it is clear that the structure and expressive content of Medieval plainsong and 20th century art music are different. What was "normal" in the middle ages, at least within early church music, was monophonic music which consisted of a single musical line, sung in unison, set to religious text. It was written to the power and glory of God and to express religious conviction. In contrast, in modern times, Sadie (1986) writes that works of music "carry further the continuing process of the breakdown of tonality and an increase in dissonance," and "There is in them a conscious, deliberate element of violence and distortion, a renunciation of traditional ideas of the beautiful and the expressive" (p.422). Green also makes a relevant comment concerning how "norms" change over time:

"Styles of art change as do the standards of language. But they also are changed when men, reflecting upon what has been normative, fix their loyalty upon some other norms. A new style of music, of poetry or of architecture...These are the fruits of action, and they
are norm-regarding, but with the respect to norms which have not before found concrete expression in human activities. And in this respect they are norm-creating actions. (p. 135)

The difficulty lies in determining what these structural/cultural norms are at any one time. It may be that, at varying points in the history of one particular genre of music, or within cultures, that structural/cultural norms may be similar. Bailin (1988) makes this point in considering why earlier music within a particular genre or music of another culture, becomes popular in a later era with a similar intellectual climate.

... this appeal of a work of art to the sensibility of an era is not a purely intuitive appeal unconnected with the rules and techniques of the tradition within which the work arises. Rather, it is an appreciation of aspects of the form and structure of the work and so is very much based on an understanding of the techniques, rules and underlying theory of the tradition. (p. 46)

The second cultural aspect is the cultural context. Aside from discovering what genre/cultural aspects of a particular culture are, we need to become aware of the customary ways in which the music is organized, we may want to consider the effect that the cultural context of the music may have on enhancing our music understanding. Some cultural context considerations are:

1. history
   a) when the music was created
   b) what people were thinking at the time
   c) information about the people/peoples who composed/created the music
2. politics

3. religion/ceremony, purpose for which the music was created (if there is one), social function, dancing, listening, rituals

4. language of the text

5. instruments

The cultural context of music can have a greater or lesser effect on the structure of music or seem more "internal" or "external" to the music, and hence have a greater or lesser effect on our understanding of it. For example, if we learn that Alban Berg’s (born Vienna 1885; died there 1935) violin concerto was commissioned by Louis Krasner, an American violinist dedicated to the development of new music, this information may seem "external" to the piece and have little effect on how we listen to it.\(^{14}\) If we learn, however, that Berg wrote the concerto to memorialize the 18-year-old daughter of a close friend, and that the first movement is about life and the second movement is about death, this information seems "internal" to the piece and affects how we listen to it, and hence how we understand it.

But as I pointed out when I first introduced the

---

13 See Jorgensen (1997) who makes the important point that "Changes in political structure can bring about changes in music theory and practice," and "Conversely, changes in musical theory and practice can foreshadow political changes." (p. 52)

14 Although one could argue that where a composer is born, and when, and the genre of music he wrote, in this case "new music," if we know enough about the history of music, helps us understand a lot about the piece of music and what we can expect to hear.

114
internal/external distinction in chapter 4, it is a convenient distinction, but partly an artificial one, as is the genre/cultural and cultural context distinction. Genres of music obviously exist in their cultural context, because it is the people of a particular culture which have created the music. The cultural context of the music clearly influences what genres of music are created, and genres of music, as they exist over time, reflect and reinforce their cultural context. For example, is it well known that Western art music has been reactive to its historical environment and the development of ideas and technology which shaped social practices in the various periods in which it was composed. (Sadie, 1986). The music of each period beginning with the Renaissance, and alternating through the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods focused on clarity, unity proportion and then on strong emotional expression. The cultural context of the Renaissance shaped the music composed in that period, but reactions against that cultural context and the music created in that period, helped create a different cultural context for the music of the Baroque period, and so on through the Classical and Romantic periods. We can also see many parallels among the styles of music, art, architecture, poetry and literature in the various periods, which are influenced by these same cultural contexts.15

15 It is outside the scope of this dissertation to discuss these relationships and interrelationships at great length. I refer the reader to Sadie (1987) for an excellent introduction to music which includes social, cultural, political, intellectual and religious history.
We need to study the genre/cultural and cultural context as part of understanding music, because how music is created and changes through time is very much related to when it was created and by whom, in what language, in which part of the world, using which instruments and for what purpose(s). Music is very much related to the political, social, and economic milieux in which it was created. The cultural aspect of music can help us sort and organize music into categories and help us notice similarities and differences among different genres and cultures. It can also help us understand why music all around the world has such differences and why they continue to change and evolve. Finally, it can help us to understand intimately the meaning and purpose of a particular piece of music.

**Performance**

Performance may allow us to understand music to a large extent. Performance leads to various types of understanding of music, and it may be important for more sophisticated levels of understanding. However, in this section I will address the argument that we must be able to perform music to understand music on any level.

is a "generic" capacity in all humans. Performance has been central to much of music education in North America, from playing the recorder in elementary school, to the strong emphasis on band in high school. Elliott's philosophy rests on the assumption that performing is really both necessary and sufficient to say that one understands music.

Martin (1970), on the other hand, in a very complicated discussion, argues against "the view that it is virtually impossible to understand or appreciate an activity or its end products unless one has had training in the activity" (p.231). This argument that we need to be able "to do it" to understand a discipline occurs in science and the arts, as well as in other disciplines. As I discussed in chapter 1, Martin has argued that we do not understand a subject in only one way and that we cannot argue that we understand music only through performing it. According to Martin, it does not seem to make sense to say that only through producing a painting can we understand art, or that only by carrying out a particular scientific experiment can a person understand science. Being able to perform music may enhance one's understanding of music, but it is not necessary, in all cases, to be able to perform to say that one understands. Neither is it necessary to have a knowledge of the techniques and methods used by a performer and when it is appropriate to use them. Martin explains:

117
This in not to say that knowledge of a performance cannot yield understanding of the work growing out of it, nor is it to say that one’s understanding of the work might not be enhanced if one had knowledge of the relevant performance. The point is that one can understand a work without knowing about its history [the process leading up to a work or creation], so that, although it might be very valuable to have knowledge of its history, a case would have to be made for its being valuable on grounds other than it is necessary for understanding. (p. 241)

Martin argues that being able to perform a piece of music is not sufficient for a full understanding, because there is no necessary transfer between being able to do something and other ways of understanding a performance or a piece of music. Martin writes:

There is all sorts of knowledge about a performance [of a piece of music] which one who simply receives training in the performance is not likely to get, for example knowledge about its history, its social implications, etc. (p.237)

For example, a person can perform a Mozart Minuet on the piano with perfect finger movement, technique and note-reading, but have no idea what a "Minuet" is. Certainly, if the performer knew the context of the piece, even if s/he only knew that it is an unhurried dance of courtly ladies and gentlemen of centuries past, s/he would understand it better and perform it more in character with the expression intended by the composer.

As I discussed in chapter 4, we understand a piece of music by being able to "follow it" in the sense of Ryle’s perception recipes. In this sense, we can understand a piece of music
without performing it ourselves. And we certainly understand a
symphonic performance without being able to play all the
instruments and all the parts ourselves. We can also understand a
very sophisticated piece of piano music, such as Beethoven's
Moonlight Sonata, even if we have no training or minimal training
on the piano. And as Martin has pointed out, we can also perform
music without fully understanding the music in other important
ways, as in my example of the Minuet above.

Therefore, we can understand music, and in many different
ways, without being able to perform it. In the context of the
multidimensional nature of understanding and understanding music,
I have developed in this dissertation, performance is only one
way in which we can engage ourselves with music to understand
it. Performance is an important factor, along with many others I
have discussed that play a role in understanding music cross-
culturally.

Listening, Audiating, and Hearing

In the music education literature there are several types of
activities which allow students to engage themselves with music:
composing, performing, listening, improvising, and reading.
Students can listen to music by singing, playing an instrument,

---

16 See Jorgensen (1997, pp.12-13), for example, who argues that
understanding music involves both propositional as well as procedural
knowledge and who seeks to ally practical and theoretical knowledge. See also
Davies (1994, p. 338) who makes a similar point.
participating in the music through bodily movements, sitting in front of an operating CD player or listening to live performances of others. However it seems in the literature what is meant by "listening" is what Swanwick (1999) more aptly calls "audience listening," listening to the performance of others.

Listening is a complex topic. There are two issues which I will address here concerning listening.

1. What listening entails.

2. Difference between listening, audiating, and hearing.

Listening entails a broad range of considerations as both Rowell (1983) and Reimer (1997) have described. Of course it is no coincidence that the types of considerations involved in listening to music are similar if not identical to the range of considerations involved in understanding music. Listening takes into account many of the same considerations as understanding music does. The important distinction to make of course, is that listening is an activity, or something you do, but understanding is an upshot, something that may occur because you listened.

One may also consider different types of listening. According to Reimer (1997) listening includes:

- musical details being heard
- critical judgements being made
- historical and cultural understandings being brought to bear
- aesthetic insights being employed
- affective power being experienced
- analytical synthesis being made
- useful comparisons being employed
- preferences being reflected
Rowell (1983) provides an almost identical list to Reimer's (1997), adding several activities involved in listening which he calls "remembering, predicting, retrodicting (reinterpreting the music one has just heard)" (p. 130). Rowell points to the difference between a type of aesthetic surface listening concentrating on how the music makes a person feel at each moment, with a type of "structural" listening in which a person concentrates on how the music is organized involving both direct and delayed responses. Rowell's description of structural listening comes close to what Gordon (1993) calls "audiation" which he defines as the process through which we understand music:

Audiation takes place when we hear and comprehend music for which the sound is no longer or may never have been physically present. In contrast aural perception takes place when we simply hear sound that is physically present. Sound is not comprehended as music until it is audiated after it is heard. (p.13)

Gordon's notion of audiation points to the difference between listening to music "in the moment" and being able to organize the music into a larger structure as we listen to it. An aspect of the ability to audiate, that relates to my discussion here, implies that we can retain the music we have just heard in an organized fashion, predict what will come next in the music, and keep reorganising the music as we listen to it until we hear...
it as an organized whole.

As interesting as the different descriptions of listening and audiation are, important for understanding music is the difference between listening to music and hearing it.

Let us first look at the relationship between the concepts of "listening" and "hearing" in terms of White's (1967) notion of reception verbs, as outlined in chapter 1. To review, "reception" verbs (see, hear, notice), pick out the upshots of a distinctive subset of action verbs (look, listen, watch), where the action consists centrally of paying attention to something.

There is a special kind of relationship between attention verbs and reception verbs which has important implications for the educational intentions we have: we can teach people strategies to increase the likelihood that they will pay attention (sit up straight; ask yourself what type of rhythm the music has, etc.) and we can arrange situations to enhance paying attention (remove distractions, have a good CD player, etc.), but we cannot guarantee that the person will have the upshots we intend. We can look and fail to notice or listen and fail to hear what is intended. What we see, hear, notice is heavily dependent on our knowledge.17 As White said, "What we receive, comes to us

---

17 Martin (1970, p. 146) would agree with the above analysis regarding understanding: "If explaining something to someone necessarily aims at understanding, it does not necessarily result in understanding any more than teaching necessarily results in learning."
provided we have been appropriately prepared. We do not produce it or gain it, secure it or bring it off." (p.69) and "to be struck by something in the sense of noticing ... is to receive knowledge of it, to be able to tell what it is" (p.70). In other words, while listening to music is an activity, hearing music in a particular way is not something that you do; it happens to you because you understand the music.

Our Conceptual Apparatus Continuum

The notion of a conceptual apparatus, a place holder or metaphor for a person's system of concepts, is important for understanding music. As Green (1971) shows, the concepts we have are a central component of our belief system. Our concepts and beliefs do not exist in isolation from each other: they form systems—however incoherent, or contradictory these systems may be (Green, 1971). And this is true of the concepts we have which are musically relevant.

As I interpret it, the notions of a conceptual apparatus and a conceptual apparatus continuum are not some type of psychological theory, but a way of explaining how a person's system of concepts is involved in understanding something and how this understanding becomes more sophisticated. The notion of a conceptual apparatus can help us make many important points about understanding music, which I discuss below:

1. Because humans have a conceptual apparatus in place for
the music of their own culture, they cannot be a "blank slate" when they attempt to understand the music of another culture.

2. Our conceptual apparatus is the basis for what music sounds "normal" and what sounds "odd" to us.

3. We have to adjust and adapt our existing conceptual apparatus to understand the music of another culture.

4. Conceptual apparatuses exist on a continuum from less reflective to more reflective.

5. Being able to talk about our concepts and give correct musical terminology, along with other factors involved in understanding music, helps us to come to a more sophisticated understanding of our own music or the music of another culture.

As I discussed in chapter 4, we have an implicit grasp of music we experience around us based in Ryle's (1954) notion of perception recipes, so that when students arrive in the school system, they already have a musical conceptual apparatus in place, based in the type of music they have experienced in their "world of music." If most of the students in a class come from a Western background, for example, they will already bring with them their own unreflective knowledge of music. While we may be able to make them aware of what elements are part of their unreflected conceptual apparatus, it is highly unlikely that students will be able to cast it aside and suddenly become a "blank slate" onto which we can impress a wide variety of

---

18 See Serafine (1984) who argues against the classic "blank slate" view that the mind simply receives music, on the contrary, it constructs it through
musics and expect the students to hear each one isolated unto itself. The students may not even be aware of how they categorize music into different genres such as pop, rock and classic. Also, the concepts they may have in place cause them to consider music that they cannot categorize as "odd" and they most likely dislike it. This may occur when they listen to a type of music that has a structure which is completely foreign to them. If we do not have the appropriate conceptual apparatus for a music which is unfamiliar, if we do not have knowledge of a variety of musical structures, we may hear unfamiliar musical harmony, melodic structure and rhythm as disjointed factors or as one big complex noise. For those of us who live in the Western world and who listen to traditional Chinese music, for example, the music seems to some of us to have no structure or at least no structure we may understand: hence we have difficulty comprehending it. Although we may listen attentively to this type of music, we cannot hear the music in a way which makes sense to us, since we lack the necessary conceptual apparatus to understand that particular type of music. We may need to modify or adapt our conceptual apparatus so that we can learn to hear and understand the music of another culture.

Important for education is that conceptual apparatuses exist on a continuum ranging from an unreflective apparatus to a reflective apparatus. Students can be made aware of the human mental processes.
unreflective apparatus they possess by studying the music of their own culture. For education we must recognize and become aware of the musical concepts we possess and raise them to a reflective level to allow more sophisticated levels of understanding to occur. The possibility of moving along the continuum from an unreflective apparatus through various degrees and qualities of reflective apparatus ought to be a major aim of music understanding and education. Such a move is crucial in coming to a more sophisticated understanding of familiar genres of music.

Having a reflective conceptual apparatus raises the question of articulation— the verbal capacity to state the rules or principles which have been learned. There are arguments both for and against the necessity of articulation of principles or rules to show that we have learned a principle or rule (Green, 1966). I believe that one way we can demonstrate that we have a more sophisticated music understanding involves articulation. In order to learn the conceptual structure of a new genre of music from a different culture, it certainly helps in understanding it, to have a way to talk about it; we can explain which elements of its structure and expressive content are new to us. We are able to reflect on our "own" music and articulate how it is the same or different from the "new" music which we are studying. This is one of the ways we can develop a conceptual musical structure for many different genres of music from many different cultures.
Understanding and Appreciation

Important for understanding music cross-culturally is the relationship between understanding and appreciating music. As I will discuss below, understanding is linked to appreciation, and understanding may also imply appreciation. It is a relationship which is complicated to explain, due to the ambiguity of both the terms involved.

There is a tendency in the literature written from the Western art music perspective, to sometimes use "understanding" music interchangeably with "appreciating" music as in the example below, where Goldman (1995) begins by talking about "understanding," but ends by talking about "appreciation."

In regard to the types of affective states aroused, debate centres on whether these are ordinary garden-variety emotions or feelings peculiar to the experience of listening to music. No one disputes that the latter feelings are crucial to listening to music with understanding. Musical forms, as these combine harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic elements, are heard and often identified through developmental affect. Formal developments that are not yet complete- for example harmonic progression from tonic to subdominant to dominant or regularly rising melodic patterns- create expectations for further development and resolution. These expectations are felt as tensions, and the affective effect is heightened by delay or prolongation of the fulfilment of expectation and closure. Those who appreciate music do not listen passively and passionlessly. They actively listen for what is to come in light of what has been foretold, pointed ahead by the unfolding progressions. (p.51)

In some other cases, "appreciate" is used in regard to
music, where understanding is used for other subject matters, suggesting that "appreciate" is a more appropriate for discussing music. For example, in the Scheffler quotation above (1965, p. 19), he writes about "understanding" quantum theory, but about "appreciating" music. (However, this may just be an older style and choice of vocabulary in writing about music).

It is interesting that in the articles that explore understanding music cross-culturally, the question is, "can we understand the music of other cultures?" and not "can we appreciate the music of other cultures?" This focus on understanding rather than appreciation is perhaps a result of the close association of "appreciation" with "aesthetic appreciation" and the relationship of aesthetic appreciation in turn, to Western art music. As Hare (1985) points out, "'appreciation' does not pick out a response which is peculiarly aesthetic" (p.59). However he argues, that in "aesthetic education," we do make positive and negative aesthetic judgements involving both intellectual comprehension and affective involvement. Perhaps the term "appreciation" has been dropped in the cross-cultural literature because of its association with aesthetic judgements. At the same time questions concerning understanding the music of other cultures are concerned with valuing the music as the people of that culture do. Thus they are questions which have to do with appreciation. As Lamarque (1999) points out, "The tension between appreciating objects aesthetically and understanding them as

128
cultural objects runs deeply through the subject" (p.15).

Although the concept of appreciation is a thesis topic in itself (Zenker, 1994), as is understanding, here I can outline aspects of appreciation which have been agreed upon in the literature (Hare, 1985; Zenker, 1994). The central sense of appreciation is the estimation of value which may or may not imply positive evaluation or "liking." Appreciation is ambiguous and for the purpose of my discussion here it has three main senses:

1. Subjective liking sense: It can mean "liking" in the sense that a person simply likes something but has no reasons why, except for a positive, subjective, emotional response.

2. Judgemental sense: Appreciation can mean that we have the appropriate knowledge and understanding to make objective judgements about something. This is the central sense of appreciation.

3. Objective liking sense: It can mean liking in a sophisticated sense; we like something because we use a set of objective conditions (Bergman, 1994) to ascribe a level of artistic value to the music and we value it based on our understanding of it.

Although appreciation does not require "liking," moreso than understanding, it implies like or favour and is made more robust with liking. Pedagogically speaking, it is important to be able to give reasons for liking music. Important for education is that
appreciation presupposes understanding—we can only assign value to the music once we understand it. We cannot appreciate music, except in the subjective liking sense, unless we understand it.

Understanding is the basis of appreciation, but there is also a sense in which understanding implies appreciation. In previous sections of this dissertation I have discussed the importance that structure and expression play in understanding music. If we understand the structure of a piece of music and can recognize the expressive elements of the music, we tend to evaluate it. We make judgements about the worth, quality, structural and expressive elements, significance, affectiveness, effectiveness, goodness, complexity, and simplicity of a piece of music. These are all value judgements based in the musical concepts we have learned.

In a sense, appreciation is the "end stage" of understanding music. If we appreciate a piece of music we would naturally also have taken the necessary steps to understand it. If we understand a piece of music internally—how the various parts fit together to create the whole, and externally—compared to other pieces of music, we also tend to evaluate it. We also make judgements concerning artistry such as how well the performer has captured the style of the piece of music as well as the technical skill displayed.

The point about appreciation for understanding music cross-culturally, is that if we understand a piece of music, beyond the
most basic level, it would be odd not to appreciate it in some or all of the ways I have outlined above. And conversely if we "like" a piece of music, in the subjective liking sense of appreciation, it is pedagogically important to be able to give reasons for this liking. When we study the music of other cultures we can learn, for that culture, how they evaluate their music, which may or may or may not involve any "aesthetic" considerations, unless we use "aesthetic" in the broad sense of "value judgements of things musical" (Bowman, 1993).

Range of Factors Involved In Understanding Music Cross-culturally

In previous chapters, I have argued that some writers in music and music education have created an artificial gap between the way that we understand Western art music and music of other cultures. I have argued that not all notions of "aesthetics" in music are tied to 18th and 19th Western aesthetic theory and disentangled the use of "Western" concepts from the aesthetic theory of this time period. While our Western beliefs, standards, and practices have a long and complicated history behind them, it does not mean that Western music does not have characteristics in common with the music of other cultures. Further to these points, empirical research into pitch variations and brain function neither define what understanding music means nor prove or disprove the possibility of cross-cultural music understanding, and ethical arguments that we are denigrating the music of
another culture by using Western concepts or any concepts we choose are unjustified. I have also argued that we can use concepts such as melody, rhythm, harmony structure, and form in combination with other generic concepts, or base properties, such as when does the music begin and end, repetition/contrast, simplicity/complexity, unity/variety, and tension/release, to understand music cross-culturally. Thus the tensions between a universal understanding of music through generic concepts and the relative cultural specific understanding of music as "cultural object" may be resolved through the consideration of a number of interrelated factors that play a role in understanding music cross-culturally:

1. rhythm, harmony, melody, form, and expressive elements
2. concepts
3. terminology
4. perception recipes and basic comprehension
5. internal/external musical context/structure of a particular piece of music or a particular genre of music
6. culture
7. our conceptual apparatus
8. listening, audiating, and hearing
9. performing, composing, improvising, and reading
10. personal experiences

---

19 One may think of these factors as existing hierarchically. However, to order them in this fashion is outside the scope of my thesis.
11. levels of sophistication of some/all of these 1.-10., which may lead to appreciation--value judgements based in understanding.

This set of considerations cannot be employed as a simple check-list for determining when a person has achieved understanding, because they do not operate in isolation from one another. For example, we cannot have a perception recipe for a particular piece of music if we have never listened to that piece of music. We cannot simply say that if a person takes one of these factors into consideration that s/he understands music fully or completely. Rather, this range of considerations attempts to illustrate that understanding music is not a unidimensional concept. Nor should we be surprised to discover that understanding music is so complex. The fact that there are a variety of factors involved in understanding music is consistent with the nature of understanding as it has been discussed by various authors.

Martin (1970) has written about various aspects of understanding. One of her theses, as I described in chapter 1, is that the verb "understand" takes a variety of indirect questions which are implied according to the object(s) of understanding and the context in which this understanding is to occur. As she points out, when we say we understand a person we can have the implied meaning; one can understand what a person is saying, or understand that a person is lying, or understand why a person is
saying something or understand how a person knows what s/he is saying. Her point is that with regard to a particular discipline, there is not one and only one characteristic question that can be asked. Similarly in understanding music, we can understand what makes one piece of music different from another, understand that one rhythm is different than another, understand why one genre of music is different from another and understand how music of various cultures differ.

Baily (1996), in the opening to his criticism of Walker's (1996a) essay "Open peer commentary: Can we understand the music of another culture?" also points out the ambiguity about the term "understand." Walker defines understanding as a product of the way the mind works when it engages in musical behaviour: "Implicit in the title is a discussion about what different human groups might share in the way of commonalities in the way minds work and therefore in their products where music behaviour is concerned " (p.103). Baily questions:

Is he [Walker] asking whether we can successfully analyze the music of another culture, in terms of its underlying principles, its "grammar", its relationship to the social structures and cultural systems in which it is embedded? Or is he asking whether we can perceive the music of another culture "correctly", i.e. can we hear it in the same way that a culture-bearing member of that society in question does? Or is he asking whether we can learn to perform the music other than our "own"? (p.114-115)

I think that in pointing out the different ways we can discuss how we understand music, because understanding music can
mean different things, Baily (1996) has found the root of the problem of understanding with regard to music. A researcher cannot assume that understanding music means one and only one thing, as Walker has done. The problem is made worse by Walker’s (1996a) inability to realize that he has done so. This is demonstrated by Walker’s rebuttal to Baily: “Baily’s comments about different ways of expressing the same thoughts have surely got him into all kinds of trouble” (p.127). This clearly shows that Walker believes that understanding music has one and only one interpretation.

Scheffler (1965) argues that there is not any single skill or technique involved in understanding, or such a thing as "understanding know-how." According to Scheffler (1965), some educational terms, such as "appreciate" and "understand," outstrip very general uses and definitions of "to believe, know, learn, and teach," and are difficult to classify and define. He calls these terms "achievements" and argues that they do not have strictly associated single techniques or tasks, but groups or sets of techniques:

One who understands quantum theory knows how to read and one who appreciates music knows how to listen. But these bits of know-how are not strictly associated; they are not equivalent to knowing how to "understand" and knowing how to "appreciate" respectively. Understanding and appreciation cannot, it would seem, readily be said to be exercises of technique or know-how, as swimming might be said to be an exercise of swimming know-how. For there seems to be no such thing as "understanding know-how" or an "appreciating know-how." Much less can learning to understand or to
appreciate be suggested to reduce to mere acquisition of such know-how. (p. 19)

Thus understanding music cannot be equated with a single type of "understanding-music-know-how"; it is not surprising to discover a range of factors involved in understanding music.

Understanding also seems to connote a "dynamic" quality existing between the knowledge to be learned and how the learning is accomplished, i.e., the learner’s interaction with the subject matter. Both Daniels (1986) and Barrow and Milburn (1990) consider the concept of understanding to have properties like a combination of learn and know that encompasses both the agent (the learner) and the subject matter.

It [understanding] is like know in its epistemological role, particularly in the fact that we must satisfy something analogous to an evidence condition- even when we are talking about our own U [understanding]. It is like learn in that 'learn' serves to tell ourselves and others that our abilities, dispositions, etc. have been relatively permanently altered. To come to understand is likewise to change our abilities- to see, do, realize, appreciate, etc. (Daniels, 1986, p.285)

In the first place the connotations of 'knowledge' and 'understanding' are rather different. The former may suggest the acquisition or possession of information in an inert form. While the latter necessarily implies that the information in question is imbibed in such a way that it cannot lie inert. Secondly, by concentration on knowledge and learning we have to some extent kept the two distinct: while philosophers consider the nature of knowledge in the abstract, psychologists study the mechanics of learning, without paying much attention to what is being learned. But what is of prime interest to us as educators is precisely the experience or act of understanding that encompasses both the agent and the subject matter. (Barrow and Milburn, 1990, p. 320)
I conclude this presentation of the range of factors involved in understanding music and the literature on understanding which supports the multidimensional nature of understanding music, with the foundational claims underlying the range of factors:

1. Understanding music, except in the most basic sense, involves more than the ability to recognize musical elements.

2. To understand music one needs to know how to follow it, to notice similarities and differences, and to anticipate what will come next based on what one has just heard.

3. Understanding music is a matter of degree, from basic comprehension to analysis or interpretation; there are different levels and types of understanding, more and less sophisticated.

4. To understand music at more than merely basic levels, one needs to be able to do both levels 1 and 2 above, and have a sophisticated musical vocabulary.

5. Performance contributes to understanding at any level and may be important for more sophisticated levels of understanding.

6. Understanding may presuppose answers to many indirect questions-- what, that, how, etc. We cannot assume there is only one mode of understanding in music.

7. We cannot ask if we understand a particular piece of music and assume that it means one particular thing.

8. There is not one single technique or task associated with understanding music, but sets or groups of tasks.
9. There are generic music concepts that may aid us in understanding both Western and non-Western music.

10. Understanding music, except at the less sophisticated levels, involves cultural aspects.

11. Understanding may be necessary for a broad appreciation of music.

Conclusion

This chapter brings together the various important factors involved in understanding music which I have discussed throughout this dissertation. In attempting to understand the music of any particular culture, any/all of these factors may be particularly pertinent. I have had two main purposes in arguing for a range of factors being involved in understanding music cross-culturally. The first is to counter claims which focus on only one consideration of understanding to the exclusion of most/all of the others, arguments which I have addressed throughout this dissertation. The second purpose is to possibly provide music educators with a new basis for their philosophy of music education, that is: "music education as promoting an understanding of music."

In the next chapter, I present the educational implications and conclusions of my conception of understanding music, suggest some areas for continuing research and end with some final thoughts.
Chapter 6

Educational Implications, Conclusions, and Areas for Continuing Research Based Upon my Conception of Understanding Music Cross-culturally

Educational Implications and Conclusions

As a research topic, understanding music can be approached from two perspectives: the theoretical and the practical. In this dissertation, I have focused on the former perspective and concerned myself with two main questions: "What does it mean to understand music?" and "What are the issues surrounding understanding music cross-culturally?" The purpose of this dissertation was to address these questions and to come to some conclusions about what is involved in understanding music cross-culturally. To this end, I have presented a conceptual analysis of understanding, an overview of the various philosophical perspectives on understanding music, an analysis of what is involved in understanding music from both the Western art music and the cross-cultural perspectives, and a range of factors involved in understanding music cross-culturally. Based on my analysis of factors relevant to understanding music, I now apply theory to a more practical question: "How can understanding music be nurtured in the classroom?" Below I examine the effect that my conception of understanding music cross-culturally has on resolving two tensions in music education: The first tension is between the universal generic view of teaching from the "top-
down," based on understanding how the music is organized and the cultural specific view of teaching from the "bottom-up" beginning with culture. The second tension is between teaching for understanding music through non-performance listening or teaching for understanding music through performing.

The tension between the top-down and bottom-up approaches to understanding music cross-culturally are seen in two "basic assumptions" from ISME's (International Society for Music Education) "Policy on Music on the World's Cultures" (1994). The first assumption listed here is based on the top-down approach and the second is based on the bottom-up approach:

1) d) A music should be studied and may be understood as a system of sound and of audible processes, as a set of behavioral patterns and, as a system of ideas and concepts.
1) e) Music can best be comprehended in social and cultural context and as a part of its culture. Properly understanding a culture requires some understanding of its music, and appreciating a music requires some knowledge of its associated culture and society.(p.67)

The debate between the top-down and bottom-up approaches in the music education literature is exemplified by two writers, Swanwick and Walker. Swanwick (1999) represents understanding music cross-culturally from the top-down:

If we are to stay close to music and to the principles that we should work for music's expressiveness, then we shall sometimes have to cut off cultural labels and help shift the barriers of tribal possessiveness and exclusiveness. One strategy is to recognize that, in spite of the apparent diversity of much of the world's music, we can still identify elements that, though they
may appear in quite different contexts, are common to
much music. We can think of repeated melodic or
rhythmic patterns, the use of scales or modes, of
chorus and antiphonal effects, call and response, dance
rhythms, drones, effective changes of texture or
timbre. We can extend our idea of what Orff called
limited structures, to take in ragas, whole-tone
scales, note-rows, jazz and blues chord sequences, and
so on. In these ways we can extend our expressive range
and in handling these elements come to have a better
understanding of the minds of other people by entering
into their musical procedures. (p.138)

Walker (1997) represents understanding music from the bottom-up:

The problem with assessing acoustic universals and
attempting to build a multicultural music curriculum
around them, is that they are surface structures. They
(and indeed all acoustic patterns of sound identified
as music) are sonic products of music cultures, not the
cultures themselves. If one of the aims of
multicultural music education is to promote cross-
cultural understanding (and this is indeed a laudable
aim), then teaching the music of other cultures by
identifying and playing examples from all systems which
use gapped pentatonic scales or all systems which bend
pitches is sadly off target. The social structures,
historical and contemporary, which give rise to these
similarities are quite possibly completely unrelated.
These deep structures, the social elements are crucial,
as they shape not only the music itself, but also the
performance and perception of the music by members of
the society....It is therefore fundamentally necessary
to teach all music from the ground up, through
authentic methods of teaching and transmitting so that
the students can begin to perceive the music’s
structure and performance through culturally specific
constructs. (p.44)

The motivations behind these two approaches are different.
The argument for studying music from the top-down is that the
purpose and importance of music education is to understand music
and this includes the music of other cultures. The overriding
argument for studying the music from the bottom-up, which puts
culture before music, is that the purpose, and importance of
music education is to understand other cultures through their music.

There is also still a tension, division or even a conflict between understanding music by non-performance listening (Reimer, 1997; Swanwick, 1999) and by performing, most notably Elliott's (1995) philosophy which has performance as the root of understanding music. Reimer and Swanwick have advocated the importance of listening as "audience listening" and not only listening while a person is composing or performing. Both advocate listening "as audience": because this is the way that most people experience music in their lives:

We must finally eliminate the embarrassing and destructive gap between the major way people partake of music in their lives--listening-- and our neglect of, and disparagement of, the teaching of listening in our music programs. [We must dispel] the myth that all we need to do to teach listening is to teach performing. This particular myth is insidious because it perpetuates our elitist bias that performing is the be-all and end-all [sic] of musical experience and the source from which all good things, and only good things flow. According to this myth, as long as our students perform all other musical learnings will naturally happen. (Reimer, 1997, p. 37)

Both the activities of composing or performing by themselves will inevitably limit our musical experience to what we can ourselves play or sing. Composing, performing and audience-listening each have their place, and individuals will find their own balances and preferences among the activities. If formal music education is to help students into "situated" musical discourse, it has to offer more than one single entry point. (Swanwick 1999, p. 135)
My analysis of factors relevant to understanding music cross-culturally accounts for both the top-down and bottom-up approaches to understanding music; it includes organizational, cultural considerations and a range of other considerations for understanding music. As well, my conception of understanding music provides a rationale for a curriculum that strives to include all the ways we engage in music-listening (whether as audience or as a performer or composer), performing, composing, improvising and reading. The main educational implications of my analysis are that our approach to understanding the music of our own culture or that of another culture must be multidimensional and multifaceted. Alone, any one activity of performing, listening, composing, improvising or reading, or any theoretical study of music are but single tasks in the process of developing a sophisticated understanding of music. My position is that an adequate conception of understanding music cross-culturally allows a unification or reunification of listening and performing for music education. We have to address the issue that most people, once they leave school, engage in music by listening, rather than by performing. At the same time, many students' only opportunity to play a musical instrument is in school, since they lack private lessons outside of school. And yet again, we want to provide students with a music education which gives them the ability to make reasoned decisions about the music to which they choose to listen. A philosophy of music education based in
promoting music understanding does justice to all these concerns in that it includes all the ways in which we engage ourselves with music.

Areas for Continuing Research

Below I suggest some areas for continuing research supported by my conception of understanding music cross-culturally:

1. Interdisciplinary studies of what the interrelationships of theories of concept of mind, psychology of music, ethnomusicology and neuroscience can tell us about the complex nature of, and the many factors involved in, understanding music.

2. Consideration of what factors, and to what degree these factors, are involved in various levels of sophistication of understanding music and what they may include.

3. Research into the "developmental" questions of understanding music: what to teach and what levels of sophistication of understanding can be achieved by children/students of various age groups.

4. The development of broad-based tests for assessment of understanding music, including the wide variety of considerations for determining when a person has achieved understanding I have outlined.

5. Research into what being "musically educated" means. In the past, some in our profession have assumed that being educated in Western art music constituted being educated in
music. Our profession now needs to redefine what being "musically educated" means. As Schwadron (1984) states: "The need for formal education, internationally, to confront the world of music honestly, in a dedicated commitment to the redefinition of the musically educated person--politics not withstanding--is imminent" (p.12).

6. Research into implications of my conceptualization of understanding for disciplines other than music. There may be a multidimensional range of factors involved in teaching other subjects, subjects which may currently be taught considering only a limited number of factors involved in understanding that discipline.

7. An assessment of changes that need to be made in music schools and teacher training programs to prepare teachers to teach for understanding music cross-culturally. To my knowledge most music schools in North America, and internationally, only train music educators in Western art music. This focus on one genre of music to the exclusion of jazz, popular music, rock and roll, and World music, I believe, does not prepare music teachers for the multicultural classroom.

**Final Thoughts**

I believe that "understanding" music should be a significant purpose of music education. Music plays an important part in all our lives; students should understand the music that they hear
around them, so that they can make informed choices and
judgements about it, and give reasons for their choices, rather
than just expressing like or dislike. Students are also consumers
of music who listen to the radio, go to concerts and buy compact
disks. In effect, they are the music consumers of the future,
determining what music is produced and what music their own
children will hear. As with art, or architecture, students should
have an understanding of music as a necessary and valuable part
of their education, so that they can feel confident to influence
their "world of music" by the choices they make. Clearly, there
needs to be continuing research into the important and
interesting topic of understanding music.
Bibliography


153


