

Toward Centers for Arts Integration: A Sociomusicological Path?

This chapter started as a response to Terry Gates' suggestion that perhaps the moment for "sociomusicology" as a discipline had arrived. I've revised my original letter to Terry quite a bit for *Born to Groove* but I hope it still has the feeling of a letter to a friend.

To really study musicking as process would be great sociology, whatever anyone calls it. And anyone studying musicking as process closely will be doing the only musicology that matters, the how of it. As a generalist, I've tried to resist the pull toward *sociomusicology* which I've felt very strongly at times, e.g. listening to John Shepherd's lectures as we worked together two summers when he was at Trent in the 1980s. He was doing sociomusicology as a conceptual framework and theory as well as I've ever witnessed it; learned a lot from John. And Chris Small's trilogy is finally catching on and can stand as a very accessible model of jargon free prose for music educators reporting on their worlds. I don't think he makes a big show of calling it sociomusicology either.

Since writing a 40-page term paper for David M. Schneider called "Sociomusicology" back in 1961 (and Schneider's six pages of typed comments *would* be an interesting article in the pages of the first SM Journal) I've used the term, usually in a joking or ironic way, and almost always with "Applied..." put in front of it, (as in the 4 issues of "Echology: A Green Annual of Theoretical and Applied Sociomusicology") insisting that more meta meta meta, more terminological screens, more abstractions, more theoretical reifications, more principles, etc. is not the way forward. Adding another discipline to the over 100 at Big Universities, might really be S-M, Sadistic AND Masochistic, at this point.

I love the idea of Centers devoted to something like the sociology of musicking and arting, crafting, performing of all kinds. The only thing that could attract me back to campus would be the praxis part of some intense effort to create renaissance, protean, performance-crazy, pre-school and kindergarten teachers. I've been working with ten to fifteen 5 to 7 year olds once a week after school the past six weeks and most of them are ready to drum, to dance, to perform at the drop of a clave. As I left off yesterday the 6 year-old twins were showing me that they could hop regularly on one foot *and* stay in synch with each other doing the tumbao salsa pattern on conga drums, perfectly. Never saw that before! Wonder if the late Mongo Santamaria could do that as a kid? (Those twins are grooving very nicely after about three hours of actual instruction over the past six weeks. Now my problem is how to keep them interested while some of the other kids catch up.) They were responding spontaneously to another whiz-kid who was doing that hop and drum thing to show off. In other words little kids can do amazing coordinations, kerpow, first try! 5 to 7s want to choreograph, want to sing and drum at the same time, want to hop on one foot and drum at the same time! want to *do it all*, and soon want to play anything they know at top speed to show mastery! Many are really eager to be child prodigies -- we just won't let them. Or at least I won't let them; what's the point of playing the salsa patterns *rapido agitato* when they are meant to groove *molto deliberato*?

The 9 to 12 year-olds have all kinds of resistances built up, have to be coaxed to try anything new that may be embarrassing to learn in front of peers, get bored quickly, or get angry if they can't get it right away, etc. etc. They get it, get satisfactions from it, and can see where it might lead quicker, but, Top Priority! -- we have to figure out how to match children's amazing capacities for Primary Communication (what the disciplinarians call "non-verbal communication") at very early ages.

I want us to teach pre-K and K teachers how to drum and sing really well, how to dance energetically across many cultures, how to cartoon quickly and do caricatures on the blackboard, how to juggle a bit, how to master and teach skill list after skill list, give out merit badges for knots, merit badges for cats craddles, merit badges for hand jive routines and Japanese *teasobi*, for hamboning, etc. So why not call it a Sociology of Performance Center, put musicking and early childhood at the center of the Center, but focus on the goal of reintegrating the arts in rituals (Small's next book is on ritual, Ithink), dramas, ballets a la Louis XIII who was performing in ballets as a cherub in arms and as a toddler; choreographing by age 4 or 5; drumming in eleven different cultural traditions by age 3!!! And, playing a variety of instruments and composing his own songs by age 6. True, he had a lute player and a violinist at his beck and call from the cradle 24/7, no TV sets in 1601, no tape from the governor of Georgia. Louis had a lot of other royal advantages, but still, any child and every child could be doing what Lou 13 was doing if we put our minds to it and embody the praxes at the Centers.

Arts Is Education. I first heard this slogan coming from dancer Jacque D'Ambroise's mouth in a piece of journalism. True dogma. Deep dharma. If we had Centers that focussed on Arts Is Education from wombdrum to age 6 and could rapidly spread the gospel of empowering infants with Primary Communication (PC) skills, then "sociomusicology" and "applied sociomusicology" might be the fields that study how performances of all kinds work groovologically in terms of "participatory discrepancies" (PDs), how they encourage childrens' full expression across all modalities:

Timing PDs in grooving, sports, comedy, juggling, drama, poetry as spoken art, etc.;

Texturing PDs in sounding, coloring, costuming, vocal grains, scenery, design, etc.;

Structuring PDs a la Lenny Meyer, Vladimir Propp, Levi-Strauss, looking for the bigger gaps and deferred gratifications inside larger sequences and narratives, etc.; could all be part of a residual research and scholarship, residual in the sense that the praxes, the doing, the transmission of skills to babes in arms, toddlers, young children is where 80% of the money, energy, time, talent goes. And we the performers, as participant-observor-groovers, study these processes to improve the transmitting, to figure out how primary communication works, to understand in what order infants are most likely to learn PC (stands for Participatory Consciousness as well as Primary Communication) skills most rapidly and with the most 'in-joy-ment.'

Eventually we could also be studying "secondary communication" – the much sought after cognitive stuff – in terms of Primary Communication skills as foundation for lifelong joy, lifelong childish curiosity and enthusiasm, lifelong learning.

Eventually we could be studying Arts In Education – the much sought after enhancement of currently boring curriculum by magical arts infusion – in terms of 6 year-olds as already fully capacitated artists exploring the rest of life and its sciences with a gut refusal to be "dumbed down" having already been built into their muscles and nervous systems.

Eventually the gains for disciplines could be amazing. But if you don't put first things first, keep it simple, start with checklists of skills and highly skilled performers showing everyone that they are transmissible, enjoyable, getting transmitted to happy children as we speak, then we'll probably never get to these eventual knowledge gains.

I put a proposal something like this one in front of Bard College people six or seven years ago as a "teacher training program" that could have one groovy name or another. No great interest. Over the phone I pitched this proposal to a Prof. at Brown who thought this agenda too far out of the box for an Ivy League institution with a reputation to uphold. Bard and Brown are about as good as it gets for innovative, open, life-affirming institutions of higher learning. Nowadays, to actually get a Center like this going somewhere in the all guns no butter, less bread and no roses era, may be difficult, tricky. Short summer program? Maybe it has to be dressed up as philosophy, theory, method, new discipline, etc. to be a starter at a college or university.

"Happy children" and parents experiencing joy with their children are the people who will support a Center, a Lab and Teacher Training. Parents who understand that this joy can be continued, spread, enhanced, and used as a fuel for lifelong joy in learning, will be our advocates. Joy spreading living room by living room, playground by playground, child to child will find it's own path. I'm hoping that the for-profit Music Together and Kindermusik organizations will welcome these ideas. I'm hoping that not for profit MUSE, Inc in Buffalo, Whirlwind in Chicago, and arts-**with**-kids non-profits everywhere will grow and prosper. Who will put a higher priority on intensive play and skill-building with the littlest kids? Who will seek out pre-homeschoolers and their parents? Who will support teen moms preparing for childcare by teaching them primary communications skills? Who will develop "Louie Louie the 13th" strategies for getting infants away from the TV sets and learning to groove/focus/flow before they can walk or talk?

I'm still looking for a conference on "groove/focus/flow and what our children need to grow." I don't think anyone has tried to put together this kind of mini-conference yet, but that could be a step towards a Center somewhere.

Kenneth Aigen at NYU has a book out ("Playin' in the band" 2002) using groovology for intensive music therapy, and that gives me a lot of hope that there is a very practical or praxis oriented alliance to be made between Music Therapy and Music Education at some University. And maybe that alliance could lead to an annual conference and a start-up Center.

My recent pieces of scholarship might be relevant but after 30 plus years of researching, writing, professoring I am quite convinced that colleges and universities are not really about new knowledge, new ways of learning, new disciplines that might better qualify people for greater service to humanity. Scholarship can point to possibilities, but it doesn't seem to start anything along these lines. For now, the "applied sociomusicology" path starts with very young children and is dedicated to their full growth and maximum happiness. And that path may lead to a conference, a center, a discipline, eventually, if enough enthusiastic children get on it and stay on it as adults.

An Optimistic Postscript

Since writing the above letter as a chapter I picked up that issue of the New Yorker in which the struggles of Franz Boas against racism are given such compelling treatment. I think it was from watching Papa Franz put American anthropology together in a small room at Columbia that Maggie Mead was able to make her famous statement about a few people working together always being the factor that makes a huge difference in history.

What we need at every American university could be very simple and very small to start, basically a Boasian one room operation. If Boas could keep the famous four fields of anthropology – genetics, linguistics, archeology and socio-cultural – going in one room, we can devote one room to three operations: a groovology lab, a teacher training course, and a Participation-theory group.

A groovology lab for the scientific measurement and description of grooving is ever easier to establish; all it takes is a computer and ever more precise and convenient ways of segmenting the digital continuum.

A teacher training course or courses can be done at any time, every semester, or every summer, sending out teachers with ever better and more diversified skills resources and credentials.

And the Participation Theory group could be two or three people with interdisciplinary and intercultural interests in Performance and/or Play and/or Poetics, anyone interested in basing their theoretical work on the Praxes measured in the Groovology Lab and transmitted in the Teacher Training Courses.

Please remember that Boas had Nora Zeal Hurston measuring heads in Harlem long after the scientific credibility of such operations was in question. Similarly, in the nature/nurture debates and civilization vs. speciation debates of any foreseeable future, we will need databases and interpretations and arguments that will stand up to every possible mode of inspection. So this one room operation needs theory, laboratory, practical applications to be part of every college or university future.

Pat Campbell:

There is serious overlap between music education and music therapy when it comes to the practical skills professionals need to know, and even in the repertoire they

can take forward to share with students and clients—people. Perhaps parsimony and budgetary constraints will push something like the Boasian 'four fields in one room', or 'arts integration for children of all ages' or a 'community music' approach to emerge more quickly at colleges where 'performance studies' is already easier to fund than a fully staffed "Theatre & Dance Department" or a "School of Drama".