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# TOWARDS A TRANSCULTURAL THEORY OF DEMOCRACY FOR INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC EDUCATION

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*At present, instrumental music education, defined in this paper as the teaching and learning of music through wind bands and symphony orchestras of Western origin, appears embattled. Among the many criticisms made against instrumental music education, critics claim that bands and orchestras exemplify an authoritarian model of teaching that does not foster democracy. In this paper, I propose a theoretical framework by which instrumental music education may be conceived democratically. Since educational bands and orchestras have achieved global ubiquity, I theorize broadly for both the East and the West and draw on ancient Chinese philosophy and American pragmatism as sources of inspiration to construct the theory. This theory comprises a quintet of themes that emerge from a comparative analysis of key philosophical texts by Confucian and pragmatist philosophers, namely, the people, participation, equality, cooperation, and conflict. This paper aims to address critical issues in instrumental music education with respect to democracy, complement extant music education philosophies, and serve as a first step towards a transcultural*

*philosophy of music education relevant to the interconnected world in which we live.*

It is perhaps fair to say that when one thinks of a band or an orchestra, the image of a group of disciplined musicians responding to the gestures of an all-powerful conductor immediately springs to mind. This appears to be a problem in recent music education discourse: critics assert that school ensembles model on the practices of professional ensembles that exemplify an authoritarian, top-down, and conductor-centered approach in the tradition of Arturo Toscanini and William Revelli.<sup>1</sup> This raises a nest of philosophical questions: Is the nature of bands and orchestras inherently and necessarily authoritarian? Can instrumental music education be construed in democratic terms? What is the nature of democracy? Today, educational bands and orchestras can be found in many parts of the world, including the USA, Asia, Europe, and Australia. Since educational bands and orchestras have already achieved some form of global ubiquity,<sup>2</sup> are there philosophical resources from both the West and the East that one may mine as theoretical underpinnings for democracy in instrumental music education?

In this paper, I draw on John Dewey's metaphor of "the people" and Xunzi's metaphor of "the boat and the water"<sup>3</sup> as entry points to propose a transcultural theory of democracy for instrumental music education. My purpose is two-fold: to clarify the nature of democracy from both Western and Eastern philosophical perspectives, and to proffer ideas on how instrumental music education may be conceived democratically in light of the theoretical clarification. I not only challenge contemporary positions that the large ensemble model is inherently autocratic but also propose normative ideals for school instrumental programs. As what follows tries to make clear, the teaching and learning of music through performance in bands and orchestras can indeed be a democratic endeavor, but it involves thinking in terms of a quintet of themes that emerge from a comparative analysis of key Confucian<sup>4</sup> and pragmatist<sup>5</sup> philosophical texts, namely, the people, participation, equality, cooperation, and conflict.<sup>6</sup> I will now sketch each of these five themes in turn and propose implications for music education. In an attempt to ground the theoretical ideas in the phenomenal world of music education, I will be enlisting the help of two fictitious characters—"Mr. Chen," a band director in Asia, and "Ms. Livingston," an orchestra director in North America—in my practical examples.

## THE PEOPLE

Quoting Abraham Lincoln, Dewey describes the "life-blood of democracy" as "Government of, for, and by the people."<sup>7</sup> Critics of this tenet such as John Dal-

berg-Acton, Alexis de Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill claim that this view fosters mediocrity, instability, and the “tyranny of the majority.”<sup>8</sup> Dewey, however, argues that “rule by the people” offers an effective guard against the historical tendency for governments to veer towards a concentration of power in a small elite; this is crucial as governments may at first claim to act in the best interests of the people, but often degenerate into serving themselves and maintaining rule through the use of force.<sup>9</sup> Dewey also rejects Henry Maine’s dualism of “government” and the “governed,” claiming that in democratic societies, they are “two aspects of the same fact” as the government “consists of every member of political society.”<sup>10</sup> For Dewey, there is no tyranny of the majority because every voice should be represented in government.

Applied to educational bands and orchestras, “rule by the people” shifts the emphasis from the conductor to the students. Ms. Livingston does not regard her position as a given, but one that requires the mandate of her students; after all, her students “vote with their feet”<sup>11</sup> and may leave her ensemble if they choose to. She does not see herself simply as the “government” but the “governed” as well. In matters of curriculum, literature selection, and all aspects of the orchestra program, she seeks to ensure that she represents the voice of every student. During rehearsals, she regularly emphasizes, as Carlos Kleiber did, that in orchestral performance, it is not merely about what she as the conductor wants, but about the cumulative input of all the musicians.<sup>12</sup> She does not teach the same way all the time but attends and adapts to differences among students—a Jamesian democratic virtue.<sup>13</sup> The nature of power relations in her classroom is not a matter of what Paulo Freire would call the “oppressor” and the “oppressed,”<sup>14</sup> but one that is ethical and pluralistic.<sup>15</sup>

Dewey’s emphasis on “the people” resonates with Xunzi’s metaphor of “the boat and the water”:

君者，舟也；庶人者，水也。水则载舟，水则覆舟

The lord is the boat; his [sic] subjects the water. It is the water that sustains the boat, and it is the water that capsizes the boat.<sup>16</sup>

Xunzi’s metaphor exemplifies a key ethical value in Confucianism: *minben* (民本) or “people as the basis.” Although the Chinese words for “democracy”—*minzhu* (民主) or “rule by the people”—is a modern term, the concept of *minben* was embedded in Chinese philosophical tradition.<sup>17</sup> Its basic tenet is that rulers should consider the needs of their people. Confucius stresses the importance of providing basic modes of sustenance to the people and securing their trust, while Mencius argues that rulers who blame the lack of food on famines are no different from murderers.<sup>18</sup> The issue is legitimacy: a ruler who possesses

power but does not exercise it as a steward of the people's welfare is not a legitimate ruler.<sup>19</sup> While *minben* in and of itself is not democracy, it is consistent with democracy in its emphasis on the people. The difference, however, lies in the fact that while Confucian *minben* concerns legitimacy in holding and retaining power, Deweyan democracy goes beyond that to include legitimacy in acceding to power. While the Confucian construal stresses government for the people, the Deweyan counterpart emphasizes government by the people; both philosophies complement to create a fuller conception of democracy.<sup>20</sup>

Confucian *minben* has much to offer the instrumental music educator. It shifts the focal point from conductors to their students. For example, in literature selection, conductors should choose music based on the needs of their students rather than their own. In a recent national band competition, two of Mr. Chen's colleagues performed the difficult "Festive Overture" by Dmitri Shostakovich when their students could not handle the technical demands of the piece. When Mr. Chen spoke to the two directors, their reasons for programming the work were simply that they liked it; clearly, they had not put their students at the forefront of their decision-making process. A *minben*-inspired approach to instrumental music education reminds us that the *raison d'être* of the conductor is to serve the students, not vice versa.

Xunzi's metaphor of "the boat and the water" also offers a particularly interesting pair of lenses by which to view the relationship between the conductor and the ensemble musicians. In recent years, a number of scholars have criticized that school ensembles model on the practices of professional ensembles that exemplify an authoritarian approach. For example, John Kratus declares that the "teaching model most emulated in secondary ensembles is that of the autocratic, professional conductor of a large, classical ensemble," and David Williams claims that "the large-ensemble model places complete control in the hands of the teacher."<sup>21</sup> However, if one opens up a band or an orchestral score, it should be apparent that it is rather impossible as a matter of practical reality for conductors to dictate everything. The sheer number of parts is overwhelming; there is no way for a conductor to give either verbal or gestural instructions for every part and every measure. The actual teaching situation appears more complex than simply being "autocratic" and having "complete control." One has "complete control" when changing channels on a television set using a remote control, not when one is teaching a band or an orchestra.

As I see it, what happens in the phenomenal world of teaching and conducting appears more akin to Xunzi's metaphor of "the boat and the water." To appropriate Xunzi for my purposes here, "The conductor is the boat; the players the water. It is the players that sustain the conductor, and it is the players that capsize the conductor." Conductors can only do as much as the players are able

and willing to. It is the illusion of all-powerful conductors waving what look like magic wands that makes them seem more powerful than they really are. The construal of conductors as dictators and players as mere followers seems founded on the way it appears rather than on reality. In ensembles consisting of young players, players are limited by their technical skills and abilities; conductors cannot simply impose their musical wishes without helping their students achieve the necessary skills. In more experienced ensembles, players have minds of their own and conducting is not a simplistic matter of dictating; the conductor has to convince the players with sound musical ideas. Whether one is working with a younger or a more experienced ensemble, the emphasis can and should be on what Dewey calls “the people.”

## PARTICIPATION

In addition to a similar emphasis on the people, there is a similar importance accorded to participation in both philosophies. This is illustrated in Confucius’ striking metaphor of “three corners for one.” For Confucius, “if on showing students one corner (*yiyu* 一隅) they do not come back to me with the other three (*sanyu* 三隅), I will not repeat myself.”<sup>22</sup> This rather demanding remark ought to be read in the context of another passage where Confucius is known “to instruct others without growing weary.”<sup>23</sup> In declaring that he will not repeat himself, Confucius is not being impatient. Rather, instead of furnishing all answers in a dull, didactic manner, Confucius expects active student participation. In so doing, both the student and the teacher, and not just the student alone, are transformed.<sup>24</sup> There is a maieutic quality in Confucius’ approach similar to Socratic teaching, a sense of trust in the student’s latent knowledge waiting to be tapped.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the reticence on the part of Confucius may be due in part to the possibility that the more he speaks, the less the students are likely to think.<sup>26</sup>

To foster the principle of “three corners for one,” Mr. Chen hands out a new piece of work, provides a few guiding points, and sends students off in their various sections to work on the piece themselves. Even though he has engaged in such pedagogy for several years, he remains pleasantly surprised by his students who often bring something back to the rehearsal room that he did not expect. Should aspects of style and interpretation differ among sections, Mr. Chen presents all options and engages the entire ensemble in what Leonore Pogonowski calls “collective metacognitive thinking.”<sup>27</sup>

A similar emphasis on participation is seen in Dewey. For Dewey, the key to democracy as a way of life is the participation of every mature human being in the formation of social values.<sup>28</sup> Through active participation, humans grow and meliorate the lives of others.<sup>29</sup> Democratic participation does not mean that everybody does everything; rather, each person has “a responsible share according

to capacity” so that the whole of a society is greater than the sum of its individual members.<sup>30</sup> Since education is the preparation of individuals for participation in a democratic society,<sup>31</sup> it ought to involve active participation. Dewey likens a “spectator” in a class (that is, a non-participant) to “a man in a prison cell watching the rain out of the window; it is all the same to him.”<sup>32</sup> For Dewey, possession of authoritative knowledge is not enough; a true teacher works towards a collaborative and dialogical form of teaching which involves participation.<sup>33</sup> This can be done via “suggestive questioning” so as to “draw out” the student’s latent potential.<sup>34</sup>

From a Deweyan perspective, is the nature of instrumental music education participatory? On the one hand is the view that it is not: “suggestive questioning” is difficult to achieve in ensemble situations. The larger the ensemble, the harder it is for conductors to ensure that everyone engages dialogically without sacrificing rehearsal efficiency. On the other hand is the view that it is: every player has to participate actively and thoughtfully in order to render the whole greater than the sum of its parts; there can be no “spectators.”<sup>35</sup> No one does everything, but everyone does something. I am inclined towards the latter perspective. Those who claim that instrumental ensembles are undemocratic because of the lack of dialogue narrowly define participation in verbal terms and miss the point that playing one’s part is an act of democratic participation. Since all have to participate thoughtfully, instrumental music is probably one of the most participatory subjects in schools. Furthermore, directors of large ensembles can still make use of dialogical teaching, especially during chamber music and sectional rehearsals. Directors may pose questions and students may “reply” through their instruments. There is still dialogical engagement, albeit of a different sort.

Moreover, as noted earlier, the nature of band and orchestra is far too complex for teachers to dictate how every part should play every measure. Teachers cannot possibly teach all that needs to be taught in order to present fine performances. Initiative and active response on the part of students are needed. Construed as such, when Mr. Chen tells the trumpets “to stop playing so loudly,” he is not creating an environment of “learned helplessness, of oppressor and oppressed,”<sup>36</sup> but is pointing out, as Confucius would say, the “one corner of the square” that enables students to return with “the other three.” As the trumpets learn what it means to observe ensemble balance, they learn to think not just in terms of their own parts but also those of others, and transfer this heightened sensitivity to other musical contexts—three corners for one. They gain insight into the Deweyan notion that one is free only when others are free<sup>37</sup> and apply that sense of consideration not just to ensemble performance but also life itself. Band and orchestra, then, becomes an ethical activity.<sup>38</sup>

## EQUALITY

Participation rests upon the assumption of equality.<sup>39</sup> Dewey advocates neither equality of result where everyone is like everyone else nor absolute equal distribution of social resources, but equality of opportunity for self-realization.<sup>40</sup> He sees hope in the American public school system which was “founded in the name of equality of opportunity for all, independent of birth, economic status, race, creed, or color.”<sup>41</sup> The Deweyan emphasis on equality of opportunity for self-realization resonates with Confucian philosophy. For Confucius, “in instruction (*jiao* 教), there is no such thing as social class (*wulei* 無類),”<sup>42</sup> commonly understood to mean that teaching is available to everyone. He also never fails “to instruct students who, using their own resources, could only afford a gift of dried meat.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Mencius famously declares that “everyone can become a Yao or a Shun.”<sup>44</sup> Since both Yao and Shun are legendary sage kings who epitomize the highest of virtue ethics, Mencius is declaring his trust that everyone has the potential to excel.<sup>45</sup>

In light of claims that music of the Western classical tradition, and by extension its instrumental ensembles (that is, bands and orchestras), is an elitist art form,<sup>46</sup> the Confucian and Deweyan notion of equality of opportunity appears compelling. Even today, it is easy to regard the formal concert as an event for the socio-cultural elite and classical instrumental learning as a pursuit for the relatively well to do. Nonetheless, it seems to me that in the twenty-first century, the notion of Western classical music as elitist is what Dewey would call “dead wood from the past.”<sup>47</sup> How can classical music be elitist when classical CDs are often cheaper than the latest popular albums, YouTube videos render classical performances of orchestras available free of charge, and many music colleges around the world offer free concerts? Several music scores are on public domain and available for free. The only thing that really involves sustained financing is musical instruction.

Herein lies my argument: the only way that Western classical music can be elitist in the twenty-first century is if it is not offered in schools. If schools remove bands and orchestras from the curriculum, this would limit access only to students and families who can afford to pay for it. It is in calling Western classical music elitist and removing it from the curriculum that we make it so. Consider for example, Brenda Brenner’s report of the joy expressed by beneficiaries of the Indiana University Fairview Violin Project, a program that offers free violin instruction to students at a local at-risk school:

A really cool thing happened for her—her mother came to watch her play. It is the first time she has ever done this, worked extra hours to have the recital day off, and be there for her. I watched the mom as her child played—the



look on both of their faces! The mom was holding out her cell phone so that someone on the other end of the line could hear her play.<sup>48</sup>

The above, in my view, is access. Without the Fairview Violin Project, the girl might not have been able to experience the joy of learning a musical instrument. Clearly, both the mother and her child were thrilled. By offering bands and orchestras in public schools, teachers provide students equal opportunities to realize themselves through music.<sup>49</sup> By contrast, if one were to remove these ensembles from the curriculum, one would be denying some students, especially those from the lower socio-economic status, access to a wealth of literature. As Scott Shuler argues, instrumental music education through bands and orchestras is “consistent with the very philosophy of public education. The *least* a district can do is to offer instrumental music instruction to every student.”<sup>50</sup>

From a Deweyan perspective, equality can also be construed in terms of being equal before the rule of law, or as Dewey would say, “Without rules, there is no game.”<sup>51</sup> Rules enable social control that in turn makes free democratic participation possible.<sup>52</sup> An instrumental ensemble is bounded by many rules: rules to play together, in tune, in style, with uniform articulations, bowings, and so on. These rules do not necessarily violate individual freedom; rather, they are present as bases by which equality is possible.

Although ancient China had no notion of law,<sup>53</sup> Donald Munro notes that the uniqueness of early China was the agreement by the various philosophical schools that people are “naturally equal.”<sup>54</sup> Confucius’ disciples at times appear as his “near-equals” rather than his subordinates,<sup>55</sup> and there are instances where Confucius even acknowledges that his students are superior to him.<sup>56</sup> While rehearsing the second movement of Percy Grainger’s *Lincolnshire Posy*, a saxophone student by the name of Chien-Huei phrased the melody in a manner that Mr. Chen had not considered. However, as Chien-Huei’s phrasing was musical, artful, stylistic, and done in good taste, Mr. Chen smiled at Chien-Huei and continued conducting. As the Chinese proverb teaches us: “Green is born of blue, but beats blue” (青出于蓝, 而胜于蓝)—the student surpasses the teacher.<sup>57</sup> It is no shame when students outperform those of us who are teachers; *au contraire*, we ought to take pride in that. Just as Confucius nurtures Yan Hui who becomes superior to him,<sup>58</sup> fine conductors seek to cultivate students who eventually surpass them in one way or another.

## COOPERATION

Since democracy rests on the notion of equality, it is essentially cooperative in nature. For Dewey, democracy is a way of living whereby “mutual and free consultation rule instead of force.”<sup>59</sup> Cooperation occurs amongst the people, and

between the government and the people. Performing in bands and orchestras can be an education in democratic cooperation. Ms. Livingston's students cannot do whatever they wish willfully or forcefully, but must work together with their colleagues and her in order to present fine performances. There is also what Dewey calls "mutual and free consultation" between Ms. Livingston and her students. On the one hand, since Ms. Livingston has a greater background of experience, there is, as Dewey notes, "the same presumption of the right of the teacher to make suggestions as to what to do, as there is on the part of the head carpenter to suggest to apprentices something of what they are to do."<sup>60</sup> For example, she makes suggestions with regard to such issues as bowing, articulation, breath marks, and types of mallets to use. On the other hand, Ms. Livingston "consults" the ensemble by providing opportunities for her students to provide feedback and advice. In so doing, the conductor emphasizes communication between herself and the ensemble. As Gert Biesta notes, Dewey's emphasis on communication over learning in education is "revolutionary."<sup>61</sup>

The manner in which Ms. Livingston "consults" her ensemble resonates with the Confucian notion of *xiawen* (下問) which literally translates as "asking down." According to Confucius, Kong Wenzhi was posthumously honored with the title of "Wen" as he was "not ashamed to seek the advice of those who were beneath him in station (*xiawen*)."<sup>62</sup> The notion of *xiawen* where rulers seek the advice of those of lower status, position, and less knowledge than themselves was the *raison d'être* of the early Confucians.<sup>63</sup> They styled themselves as professional political advisors who were not only paid for their services<sup>64</sup> but might even remonstrate (*jian* 諫) with those in authority.<sup>65</sup> Such remonstrance is not altogether dissimilar to checks and balances in modern democratic governance.<sup>66</sup>

As I see it through Confucian and Deweyan lenses, the nature of cooperation between the conductor and the ensemble comprises the twin facets of consultation and obedience. When Mr. Chen wanted to program the difficult "Symphony No. 3" by Johan de Meij with his wind ensemble, he could not do so without considering the abilities of the players and their willingness to put in the work needed to bring the piece to life. As the "boat," he needed the support of his students, the "water." In the manner of Confucian *xiawen* which resonates with the Deweyan notion of "mutual and free consultation," he issued feedback forms to all the musicians of the ensemble to ascertain if they would be willing to commit to additional rehearsals, discussed the matter with the principal players to learn if they and their sections would be willing to undertake such a work, and reflected on the technical demands of the work from their standpoint. In short, Mr. Chen consulted "the people" with whom he was working.

Cooperation between the conductor and the ensemble is possible, however, only when students are willing to follow. Cathy Benedict notes she "cannot imag-

ine that anyone would suggest obedience” as a positive outcome of band education.<sup>67</sup> Dewey would. Dewey regards education “for leadership as well as for obedience” to be crucial for democratic and progressive societies; a society that functions properly requires people “to follow and to lead.”<sup>68</sup> Although the term “obedience” often takes on a pejorative connotation in educational literature, Dewey, in inimitable fashion, takes a nuanced view. It seems clear, therefore, that the nature of cooperation between the conductor and the students is a reciprocal process of consultation and obedience. Consultation goes top down; obedience goes bottom up. The cooperation flows two ways; one cannot do without the other. The reciprocal process of consultation and obedience in bands and orchestras parallels the reality of democracy—leaders seek to know the needs of the people who in turn obey the laws they set.

## CONFLICT

Paradoxically, genuine democratic cooperation can be realized only when its apparent opposite—conflict—is simultaneously embraced. As Dewey reminds us, one cooperates by giving differences a chance to show themselves. Such open “expression of difference” is not only the right of a democratic citizenry but is also a means of enriching the whole society.<sup>69</sup> Without what Richard Bernstein calls “creative conflict,” democracy becomes complacent and stagnant. It can even become a “naked power struggle” if differences are not aired and there are no real attempts to engage in debates and establish shared values.<sup>70</sup>

Again, the image of a symphony orchestra playing in harmony under the direction of a seemingly powerful conductor masks an important reality: instrumental ensembles are *au fond* about the negotiation of conflicts and disagreements. During my days performing as a professional orchestral musician, I saw how the concertmaster disagreed with guest conductors; I saw how the sub-principal viola disagreed with the bowings of the principal viola; I also saw how the principal double bass glanced in my direction (tuba) whenever our pitches disagreed. However, the beauty of ensemble performance is not the absence of differences, but playing with one voice despite the differences. As Dewey teaches us, one cooperates by giving differences opportunities to show themselves.<sup>71</sup> This is what bands and orchestras do. Through bands and orchestras, students experience what Bernstein calls “creative conflict”<sup>72</sup> as they work through an infinite array of problems verbally and non-verbally. The higher the level of maturity, the more the potential for conflicts as musicians develops musical minds of their own. Yet, the more variegated the perspectives, the more sophisticated the final product. Differences are opportunities, not impediments. This suggests, practically speaking, that teachers should broaden their students’ minds, show them alternatives, and open up what Maxine Greene calls “vistas of possibilities.”<sup>73</sup> For

example, instead of showing only one way of shaping a phrase, teachers should show many others and ask students to come up with their own.

Like Dewey, Confucius not only permits but even expects disagreement. He notes that his disciple Yan Hui never objects (*wei* 違) to anything he says, as if he were “stupid” (*yu* 愚).<sup>74</sup> When questioned by his disciples, Confucius does not simply use authority to answer, but acknowledges their questions.<sup>75</sup> In fact, he even allows himself to be corrected when he sees the value of his disciple’s disagreement.<sup>76</sup> In an instrumental rehearsal where a conductor stands like a demigod in the presence of more than fifty musicians, it is not always easy to handle situations where students disagree. Yet, to expect that students blindly conform is, as Confucius would say, expecting them to be “stupid.” When students raise issues, it is tempting as a self-defense mechanism to use authority to answer them. A more magnanimous, elegant, and egalitarian approach might be, as Confucius did, to acknowledge and consider the students’ concerns with respect.

Needless to say, negotiating conflict is not easy. In fact, aligning one’s teaching with the quintet of democratic themes unpacked, namely, the people, participation, equality, cooperation, and conflict, is fraught with difficulties.<sup>77</sup> The boat is always at the mercy of the water, which can be unpredictable. Yet, for Dewey, it is a democratic approach that makes education truly educative rather than mere indoctrination.<sup>78</sup> He encourages teachers to press on with “energy and sincerity,” to keep faith alive, and to approach the difficulties of democracy not by abandoning it, but by using more democracy and more fully grasping the idea.<sup>79</sup> For Dewey, democracy is not just a governmental but also a social and personal ideal.<sup>80</sup> He posits a rich, full, and wide idea of democracy that includes society, culture, and “all modes of human association” such as the family, school, industry, and religion.<sup>81</sup> He famously declares democracy as “a mode of associated living” and a way of life that ought to impact all aspects of living.<sup>82</sup> In its complex nature, the school instrumental ensemble seems to me to mirror the realities of a democratic society. If this is correct, the teaching and learning of music through bands and orchestras goes beyond being an education for democracy to being an education in democracy.<sup>83</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In sum, I have made an initial attempt to formulate a transcultural theory of democracy for instrumental music education. I have proposed an alternative perspective to contemporary positions that critique the large ensemble model as being an authoritarian model of music education, and also suggested that school instrumental teachers do not yield the level of power and control that critics would like to have us believe. In delimiting the discussion to five central themes, I have proffered a parsimonious framework by which instrumental music educa-

tion may be conceived democratically. Paradoxically, some of the strengths of the ideas offered in this paper are also their weaknesses. In delimiting my discussion to only five themes, I may have left out other important ones. Also, although I have drawn on one major philosophical tradition beyond the West (namely, classical Confucianism), I have omitted many other traditions.

Is a genuinely transcultural theory of democracy for instrumental music education possible? This question remains to be answered. This paper is just a beginning. Nonetheless, it seems to me that I have suggested in this paper, as David Hall and Roger Ames might say, that a “real alliance” is possible between two influential philosophical traditions in which “each sensibility can reinforce the other in ways that lead the world along at least a slightly better path.”<sup>84</sup> This should suffice for now.

## NOTES

This article is drawn from the author’s Ph.D. dissertation, “Towards a Transcultural Philosophy of Instrumental Music Education,” Indiana University, 2012.

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, John Kratus, “Music Education at the Tipping Point,” *Music Educators Journal* 94, no. 2 (2007): 42–48; David A. Williams, “The Elephant in the Room,” *Music Educators Journal* 98, no. 1 (2011): 51–57.

<sup>2</sup>For example, ensemble competitions are widespread, as can be seen in the all-state competitions in the United States, the All-Japan Band Competition in Japan, and the World Music Contest in Holland. See, for example, Frank Cipolla and Donald Hunsberger, *The Wind Ensemble and Its Repertoire* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 1994), 187–209.

<sup>3</sup>In drawing on ancient Chinese philosophy as a source of inspiration to construct a transcultural theory of democracy, it must be acknowledged right at the outset that democracy as a political philosophy originated in Greece rather than China. Still, an examination of Confucian philosophical texts reveals that there were democratic elements in ancient Chinese thought. In fact, scholars have argued that if the elements of Confucianism that were hospitable to democracy had not been suppressed and distorted by autocratic rulers, they would have flourished into democracy in China long ago. See Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 273. See also, Baogang He, “Four Models of the Relationship between Confucianism and Democracy,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (March 2010): 18–33; Sor-hoon Tan, *Confucian Democracy—A Deweyan Reconstruction* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003).

<sup>4</sup>Citations from the *Analects* that records the sayings of Confucius follow referencing in accordance with D. C. Lau, *The Analects* (London: Penguin Books, 1979). Citations from the *Mencius* follow referencing in accordance with D. C. Lau, *The Mencius* (London: Penguin Books, 2004). Citations from the *Xunzi* follow referencing in accordance with D.C. Lau, Ho Che Wah, and Chen Fong Ching, *A Concordance to the Xunzi*, ICS series (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup>All citations of Dewey’s texts will be drawn from the standard critical edition by Jo Ann Boydston. See John Dewey, *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882–1898*, 5 vols., ed.

Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972); *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899–1924*, 15 vols., ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978); *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925–1953*, 17 vols., ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985). Following standard conventions, the Early Works will be abbreviated as EW, the Middle Works as MW, and the Later Works as LW. References will list the title of the book or article, the volume number, followed by the page number (e.g., Dewey, *Art as Experience*, LW 10: 298 refers to Dewey's *Art as Experience* from the Later Works, volume 10, page 298).

<sup>6</sup>This quintet of themes does not claim to be exhaustive. For a fuller exposition of democracy, see, for example, Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).

<sup>7</sup>Dewey, "What is Democracy?" LW 17: 473.

<sup>8</sup>See John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, *The History of Freedom* (Fairford: The Echo Library, 2010); Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010); John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Bernstein notes that the word "democracy" had a negative connotation throughout most of history. Its Greek roots, "*demokratia*," means "rule by the demos" which for centuries has provoked a fear that the unchecked rule by the common people would lead to anarchy. The word takes on a positive connotation only in the nineteenth century. See Richard Bernstein, "Dewey's Vision of Radical Democracy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey*, ed. Molly Cochran (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 288.

<sup>9</sup>Dewey, "What is Democracy?" LW 17: 473–4.

<sup>10</sup>Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy," EW 1: 238–239.

<sup>11</sup>On students "voting with their feet," see Jere Humphreys, "Instrumental Music in American Education: In Service of Many Masters," *Journal of Band Research* 30, no. 2 (1995): 39–70.

<sup>12</sup>See "Carlos Kleiber—Rehearsal & Performance," (Deutschland: Arthaus Musik, 2011), DVD.

<sup>13</sup>Eric Thomas Weber, "James, Dewey, and Democracy," *William James Studies* 4 (2009): 90–110.

<sup>14</sup>Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>15</sup>On democracy as an ethical conception, see Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy," EW 1: 240. Bernstein notes that when Dewey theorizes about the ethical nature of democracy, he is drawing upon the Hegelian notion of *Sittlichkeit* and the Greek understanding of *ethos*. See Bernstein, "Dewey's Vision of Radical Democracy," 291. On democratic pluralism, see Dewey, "Social Absolutism," MW 13: 315.

<sup>16</sup>*Xunzi*: 31/147/6. See John Knoblock, *Xunzi—A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, vol. 3 (California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 262.

<sup>17</sup>Viren Murthy, "The Democratic Potential of Confucian *Minben* Thought," *Asian Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2000): 33. On the different ways of referring to democracy in the Chinese language, see Randall Everett Allsup, "Music Education and Human Flourishing: A Meditation on Democratic Origins," *British Journal of Music Education* 29, no. 2 (2012): 171–179.

<sup>18</sup>On the Confucian point, see *Analects*: 13.9 and 12.7. On the Mencian point, see *Mencius*: 1A.3. See also, *ibid.*, 1A.7 and 5A.5.

<sup>19</sup>In another passage, Xunzi notes that “Heaven did not create the people for the sake of the lord; Heaven established the lord for the sake of the people” (*Xunzi*: 27/132/19). See Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 3, 224. In addition, Mencius notes that “the people are of supreme importance; the altars to the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes the ruler” (*Mencius*: 7B.14). See Lau, *Mencius*, 159. See also, *Mencius*: 1A.1 and 3A.4. In another passage, Mencius exhorts rulers to listen to “all the people of the state” before deciding if a criminal suspect should be executed (*Mencius*: 1B.7). See Lau, *Mencius*, 22–23. This, for Viren Murthy, “hints at traces of democratic ideals.” See Murthy, “The Democratic Potential of Confucian *Minben* Thought,” 37.

<sup>20</sup>Chung-Ying Cheng, “Preface: The Inner and the Outer for Democracy and Confucian Tradition,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (June 2007): 151–154.

<sup>21</sup>Kratus, “Music Education at the Tipping Point,” 45–46; Williams, “The Elephant in the Room,” 53.

<sup>22</sup>*Analects*: 7.8. See Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998), 112. See also, Sor-hoon Tan, “Three Corners for One—Tradition and Creativity in the *Analects*,” in *Confucius Now, Contemporary Encounters with Confucius*, ed. David Jones (Chicago: Open Court Press, 2008), 59–80.

<sup>23</sup>*Analects*: 7.2. See Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 111.

<sup>24</sup>Tan, *Confucian Democracy*, 109, 191. See also, *Analects*: 5.9 and 15.16.

<sup>25</sup>Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects—With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 66.

<sup>26</sup>Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 85.

<sup>27</sup>Leonore Pogonowski, “Metacognition, A Dimension of Musical Thinking,” in *Dimensions of Musical Thinking*, ed. Eunice Boardman (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1989), 11.

<sup>28</sup>Dewey, “Democracy and Education Administration,” LW 11: 217; *Freedom and Culture*, LW 13:154; “Creative Democracy,” LW 14: 230.

<sup>29</sup>Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, MW 12: 199–200; *Democracy and Education*, MW 9:326.

<sup>30</sup>Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, LW 2: 327–328.

<sup>31</sup>Dewey, “Democracy and Education in the World of Today,” LW 13: 297.

<sup>32</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, MW 9: 131.

<sup>33</sup>Dewey, “Individuality and Experience,” LW 2: 59.

<sup>34</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, MW 9: 62. On dialogical learning in music education, see Estelle R. Jorgensen, *Pictures of Music Education* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 40, 280.

<sup>35</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, MW 9: 131.

<sup>36</sup>Randall Everett Allsup and Cathy Benedict, “The Problems of Band: An Inquiry into

the Future of Instrumental Music Education,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 16, no. 2 (2008): 170.

<sup>37</sup>Dewey, “Philosophies of Freedom,” LW 3: 102.

<sup>38</sup>This point relates to a key claim I have argued elsewhere: instrumental music education can be construed as “meliorative aestheticism”—bands and orchestras provide a cultural and artistic framework whereby students and teachers better themselves, society, and civilization. See Leonard Tan, “Towards a Transcultural Philosophy of Instrumental Music Education” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2012).

<sup>39</sup>On equality as one of the tenets of democracy, see Dewey, *Ethics*, rev. ed., LW 7: 148; *Democracy and Education*, MW 9: 99; Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 93–94; John J. Stuhr, *Philosophy and the Reconstruction of Culture: Pragmatic Essays after Dewey* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 47.

<sup>40</sup>Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 165.

<sup>41</sup>Dewey, “Education and Social Change,” LW 11: 416. Dewey himself fostered a sense of equality with his students in class. See Brian A. Williams, *Thought and Action: John Dewey at the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1998), 23.

<sup>42</sup>*Analects*: 15.39. See Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 192.

<sup>43</sup>*Analects*: 7.7. See Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 112.

<sup>44</sup>*Mencius*: 6B.2. See Bryan Van Norden, *Mengzi—With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), 159. See also, *Xunzi*: 23/116/6, and *Analects*: 17.2.

<sup>45</sup>On human educational potential, see Israel Scheffler, *In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions* (New York: Routledge, 1991), ch. 2.

<sup>46</sup>See, for example, Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Schirmer, 2008), 463–468.

<sup>47</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, MW 9:24; *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, MW 12: 135.

<sup>48</sup>Brenda Brenner, “Reflecting on the Rationales for String Study in Schools,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 59.

<sup>49</sup>This naturally surfaces, then, the issue of equity, a theme that I hope to address in subsequent papers.

<sup>50</sup>Scott Shuler, “The Importance of Instrumental Music” (unpublished manuscript, 1991), 4.

<sup>51</sup>Dewey, *Experience and Education*, LW 13: 32. See also, Jorgensen, *Pictures of Music Education*, 118, 160, 307.

<sup>52</sup>Dewey, *Experience and Education*, LW 13: ch. 4.

<sup>53</sup>Tan, *Confucian Democracy*, 57.

<sup>54</sup>Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1969), ch. 1.

<sup>55</sup>David Elstein, “The Authority of the Master in the *Analects*,” *Philosophy East and West* 59, no. 2 (2009): 144.

<sup>56</sup>See, for example, *Analects*: 5.9.



<sup>57</sup>This proverb may have Xunzian roots: “though blue dye comes from indigo plant, it is bluer than indigo” (*Xunzi*: 1/1/3). See Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 1, 135.

<sup>58</sup>*Analects*: 5.9.

<sup>59</sup>Dewey, “Education and Social Change,” LW 11: 417; *Freedom and Culture*, LW 13: 78; “Creative Democracy,” LW 14: 227–229.

<sup>60</sup>Dewey, “Individuality and Experience,” LW 2: 59.

<sup>61</sup>Gert Biesta, “Of All Affairs, Communication is the Most Wonderful,” in *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect: A Critical Engagement with Dewey’s Democracy and Education*, ed. David T. Hansen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 23–38.

<sup>62</sup>*Analects*: 5.15. See Lau, *The Analects*, 78.

<sup>63</sup>Li Zehou, *Reading the Analects Today* (Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xin zhi san lian shu dian, 2008), 159.

<sup>64</sup>Mencius himself, for example, served as a political advisor and “wandering persuader.” See for example, the fascinating exchange between Mencius and King Liang Hui on the value of popular music in *Mencius*: 1B.1.

<sup>65</sup>When actions are unethical, one ought to remonstrate with rulers (*Analects*: 13.15), parents (*Analects*: 4.18), and friends (*Analects*: 12.23); however, one should not be overbearing (*Analects*: 4.26). Similar themes can also be seen in *Xunzi*: 27/129/8 and *Mencius*: 5B.9.

<sup>66</sup>Admittedly, however, not all rulers were willing to listen to their political advisors. See *Mencius*: 2B.5.

<sup>67</sup>Allsup and Benedict, “The Problems of Band,” 168.

<sup>68</sup>Dewey, *Moral Principles in Education*, MW 4: 270; “Periods of Growth,” LW 17: 261; “Does Human Nature Change?” LW 13: 286; “Ethical Principles Underlying Education,” EW 5: 62; Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 94.

<sup>69</sup>Dewey, “Creative Democracy,” LW 14: 228.

<sup>70</sup>Bernstein, “Dewey’s Vision of Radical Democracy,” 303.

<sup>71</sup>Dewey, “Creative Democracy,” LW 14: 228.

<sup>72</sup>Bernstein, “Dewey’s Vision of Radical Democracy,” 303.

<sup>73</sup>Maxine Greene, *Variations on a Blue Guitar* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 143.

<sup>74</sup>*Analects*: 2.9. See Lau, *The Analects*, 64.

<sup>75</sup>*Analects*: 17.7. See also *Analects*: 6.28 and 17.5.

<sup>76</sup>*Analects*: 17.4.

<sup>77</sup>Dewey himself recognizes that democracy is an unsure and difficult path to pursue. See Stuhr, *Philosophy and the Reconstruction of Culture*, 54.

<sup>78</sup>Dewey, “Education and Social Change,” LW 11: 415.

<sup>79</sup>Dewey, “Religion and Morality in a Free Society,” LW 15: 174; “Creative Democracy,” LW 14: 227; “Individuality, Equality and Superiority,” MW 13: 297; *The Public and Its Problems*, LW 2: 325. For Dewey, “democratic means and democratic ends are one and inseparable.” See his “Democracy is Radical,” LW 11:299. Furthermore, for Dewey,

in line with the evolutionary idea that humanity has no fixed *telos* or end state, the aim of democracy is democracy itself, just as the aim of growth is more growth. See David T. Hansen, "Introduction: Reading *Democracy and Education*," in *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect: A Critical Engagement with Dewey's Democracy and Education*, ed. David T. Hansen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 7–8.

<sup>80</sup>Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, LW 2: 286. See also, "The Ethics of Democracy," EW 1: 240.

<sup>81</sup>Dewey, *ibid.*, 325. See also, James Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence* (Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1995), 177–184; Stuhr, *Philosophy and the Reconstruction of Culture*, 42; Jerome Popp, *Evolution's First Philosopher—John Dewey and the Continuity of Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 84–85.

<sup>82</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, MW 9: 93; "Creative Democracy," LW 14: 226; *Liberalism and Social Action*, LW 11: 25; "Education and Social Change," LW 11: 416.

<sup>83</sup>Needless to say, there are several negative aspects of democracy; however, these are beyond the scope of this paper. In a theoretical model of conductor-student interaction that I developed in my doctoral dissertation, democracy constitutes only one facet. In the other three facets— authority, community, and autonomy—I address, among others, issues of oppression, peer learning, and self-realization. These are ideas that I hope to tease out in subsequent papers.

<sup>84</sup>David Hall and Roger Ames, *The Democracy of the Dead* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1999), 162.

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