

**My Travels with the GuQin:
A personal narrative in a cross-cultural setting**

by

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B.Mus., The King's University College, 2004
B.Ed., The University of Alberta, 2007

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This project explored the significance of learning a global instrument in a cross-cultural setting. The question posed for this project was: “Can a music teacher change roles from teacher to student, move outside of the formalised classroom, and learn a music dissimilar to one’s own in a cross-cultural setting?” The cross-cultural setting was in Shanghai, China, and diverse cultural viewpoints, biases, and observations were recorded by means of journals, blogs, and informal music lessons. Every week, for one year, a one-hour informal lesson was taken on the GuQin. The informal music lessons combined both of aesthetic and praxial musicianship, which added to the complexities and rewards of learning the GuQin. These observations were later examined through a framework of narrative inquiry, focusing on temporal, spatial, and social issues. The metaphor of “travel” is used throughout the project in order to connect these observations to both the narrative and the reader. Various ways of musicing were experienced through the course of learning the GuQin, which included reading and writing traditional notation, and performing traditional music written for the GuQin. By examining the barriers of a Western-biased view on composing, performing, and listening, a new framework of music education philosophy was established. Implications for the music educator include fresh ways of exploring global musics, integrating an Eastern view into a music education philosophy, and expanding writing skills to enhance the narrative experience.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this to my wife, Alice. You have been so helpful and understanding, especially in the semester leading up to our glorious wedding. Without you, I would not have been able to continue as I have. My dedication also extends to my family, cohort members, and friends who assisted—and distracted at choice times, Mr. Wood and Mr. Montgomery—and encouraged me to focus and finish this narrative.

Prologue

A few years ago I traveled to China to meet a dear friend, and I haven't really left since. China has been a mix of both ups and downs for me. After a series of 'downs' in Shanghai, I relinquished my job as a history teacher to continue my life as a private music instructor in a city of approximately 30 million people. However, I had been teaching private music lessons since I was a teenager. I needed a change in both my musical and professional life, so I chose to begin a Master's of Music Education degree program at the University of Victoria, in British Columbia. My Master's courses provided me with the change that I needed: I had my first ever 'global musics' course. The course changed my outlook on where music education is going, where it has or has not been, and where it could improve.

What I realized was that I was living in a perfect situation in China. I was a music educator who was surrounded by possibilities for learning and growth, but I was ignorant of what to do. After choosing to study the GuQin—a traditional Chinese instrument over 4000 years old—my supervisor and I agreed that chronicling my journey as a learner of an ancient instrument and the culture that surrounded it would be an excellent choice for a final project and that narrative inquiry would be the research design that best suited the nature of my inquiry. But I had much to learn about global musics, and the first was to deal with my ignorance and naivety as a global musics learner and its potential teacher.

The course I took in global musics had been enlightening, but I still felt like a wide-eyed tourist when it was over. I wondered if learning an instrument in its cultural setting—the GuQin in China—would help me bridge the gap between being a tourist and becoming a culture bearer? Would I actually know more about a particular music? Would I be more able to teach a musical genre without categorizing it, or rushing through it so I could check off the ‘world music’ box for my administrators? Perhaps these questions would be answered in time, but at the outset I needed to focus on the ‘what and how’ of knowing a global music.

The insight into global musics that I gained as a result of my travels and Master’s course reminded me that I should stop being a tourist and start learning a Chinese instrument. Chinese culture, language, and history are things that I studied—and am still studying—in order to gain deeper insight to its musics. I hoped to learn from these experiences, adapt them to my own learning style and situation, and then share this knowledge with my present and future students. One way to know who I am (and where I come from) is to know a way that is different from my own. As Elliott (1995) would say, it is “self-understanding through other-understanding” (p. 293).

Chapter One: The Rough Guide

If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge,
so as continually to be acquiring new,
he may be a teacher of others. (*The Analects of Confucius*, 2002, Chapter XI)

Rationale: Beginnings and Questions

The continuous need to improve ourselves as musicians and teachers, to improve our curricula, and to work for the long-term security of music education – all these are significant lifelong challenges that give meaning and purpose to our personal and professional lives. (Elliott, 1995, p. 309)

I was only 16 years old when I was asked to cover for an absent guitar teacher at the same music school in which I took lessons. I have never looked back since. My private music lessons expanded to include piano, bass, choir, and voice. I eventually completed my Bachelor of Education at the University of Alberta, with a major in history and a minor in music. My teaching of both history and music has taken me around the world, from volunteering at a Malawian high school to working for a private music school in Dubai. Three years ago I accepted a position teaching music at a UK curriculum-based middle and high school in Shanghai, China.

It may seem odd for a music teacher to choose to study an ancient Chinese instrument. The GuQin, however, became the catalyst to end a stalemate in my own musicianship, both as a musician and music educator. Somehow I felt that my musicianship was caught in a never-ending cycle of doing the same thing over and over

again. To explain: I enjoy challenging my students to try something new, and I feel like I am very successful in doing so. Since I began teaching music I have helped students become more involved in musicing,¹ which includes listening, performing, and composing. I have walked with my students when they have succeeded or failed. As Elliott (1995) suggests, I have tried to “enable students to live different music cultures” (p. 271). For example, my students have performed traditional Malawian songs, composed an ostinato using coke bottles, and described Lou Reed’s *Metal Machine Music*. Over time I have carefully weighed my successes and failures as well as those of my students. I, however, had not kept pace with my students with respect to learning new things. Johnson (2009) warns teachers about this:

The conventional understandings of music and the old habits and entrenched positions surrounding them have made it difficult for many people—often some of the best trained and most experienced among them—to understand and begin to account for what changes and innovations have been happening recently in musical scholarship, music making, understanding, and teaching. (p. 17)

Heeding Johnson’s advice, I began to ask myself many questions: Am I truly respecting and re-living new musical innovations, concepts, cultures, histories, and technologies? If I am not adapting my approach to these new teaching realities, then how can the learning in my classroom be mutual? What if I am approaching things incorrectly? What if I am not learning and growing as a musician? “Just what is it about my work that really matters?” (Reimer, 2003, p. 4).

¹ Elliott (1995) uses this term as “a contraction of music making... in the collective sense to mean all five forms of music making: performing, improvising, composing, arranging, and conducting” (p. 40).

I did not want to abandon what had worked for me before, but I wanted to renew and refresh my practice. I am only too aware that “music educators cannot just ‘coast’ ... as if the achievement of desirable and appropriate ends were simply a matter of having properly executed time-tested instructional strategies or having deployed ‘tricks that work’” (Bowman, 2009, p. 5). My way was just one way of doing things. My teaching ‘tricks’ worked for the time being, but for how long, I didn’t know. Shepherd (2009) encourages music educators to “seek connections outside (of) their traditional boundaries” (p. 111). I reckoned that the GuQin was about as far away from my traditional boundaries as I could get. How I had been teaching music was a product of my own experience and training, shaped through the instruction I received and the institutions I attended. Attempting another way made sense to me. I was eager to incorporate another way into my teachings, my traditions, and the institutions in which I work. I craved a new musical landscape, as a traveler aspires to discover new lands like Marco Polo did many years ago.

I sought to learn a global music instrument, thinking that there would be some sort of handy guidebook to performing the GuQin. I thought that I already knew what I was going to experience. But I was wrong. I didn’t realize the enormity of the task. I was embarking on a journey the proportions of which would challenge my innermost beliefs about teaching and learning and lead me to make stark changes to how I see this profession called teaching. Conway (2003) could not have put it more clearly: “Music education needs stories of music teachers in change” (p. 35).

If music educators can open up themselves to the vast world of music, the possibility to learn and grow is endless. Instead of being frustrated at whether or

not people know about a particular music a music educator can educate, reflect, and then realize the full potential of global musics. The full potential of global musics is music without boundaries, timelines, or labels. (journal entry, April 5, 2011)

Purpose

The purpose of my research was to study a music previously unknown to me, and then to transfer this learning, this different way of musicing, to my students and fellow music educators. I explored, researched, and learned music in a cross-cultural environment, focusing on the GuQin. I attempted to unpack and unravel my experiences using the vehicle of a personal narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; DeMethra & Nash, 2011). I chose narrative design as I felt it both suited the research inquiry and could connect with music educators who feel ‘burned out’ or lost.

An Introduction to Narrative Inquiry

As an explorer needs a compass and map at hand, a narrative inquirer needs specific tools for telling a story in a scholarly way. However, my exploration into narrative inquiry is not a ‘how-to’ guide into narrative research.² In the final chapter I will discuss narrative inquiry’s implications for music education.

To put it simply, in this project, I inquire into my life. Life is a difficult topic to write about. I willingly expose my faults, shortcomings, and misunderstandings,

² For more information on ‘how-to’ in narrative inquiry, please refer to: Bowman (2006); Barrett & Stauffer (2009, 2012); Clandinin (2006, 2007); Clandinin & Connelly (2000); Conle (2000); Conway (2003); Coulter (2009); Coulter & Smith (2009); Demethra & Nash, 2011; Jorgenson (2009); McCarthy (2007); and Polkinghorne (2007).

prejudices, strengths, and weaknesses. I also write with a purpose, a rationale, implications for education, making use of the data I have gathered. My data is a combination of blogs, journal entries, and sustained inquiry into relevant literature. The narrative draws largely on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) idea that an inquiry has four directions: inward, outward, backward, and forward. They explain:

By inward, we mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality – past, present, and future. . . . *To experience an experience* is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (emphasis in original, p. 50)

By understanding where I have come from, and where I am going, these four directions help the narrative to have boundaries. My narrative inquiry tries to connect what I have experienced to the universal and provide a new lens for examining music education issues (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bowman, 2006; Demethra & Nash, 2011; Elliott, 1995; McCarthy, 2007).

My original aim was to gain a deeper understanding of how a music teacher can adapt to new musics. Yet my aim, or what Conle (2000) would call a 'telos,' was destined to change in the flux of experiencing the narrative. Conle maintains, "the narrator can try to name a telos that she thinks is driving her work, but that does not mean that she really knows this telos" (p. 198). The telos for me eventually morphed into the purpose that was described above. Luckily, a narrative inquiry is something that is based

on ‘how’ something is being done, rather than ‘what’ is going to be accomplished.³ Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe telos as being ‘three-dimensional:’ social, temporal, and personal (p. 50). The purpose is a result of something that took the full course of this project to understand. Even now that this project is finished, the purpose will continue to adapt and change.

Clandinin and Connelly elaborate that a narrative has “temporal dimensions and addresses temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (ibid). Much like the four directions of a narrative inquiry (inward-outward, backward-forward), the three dimensions of the telos helped me to see the interconnectedness of my experiences. Being ‘in the midst’ (ibid) allowed me to be more objective in my writing, and I was able to step back and view situations as if from a plane window.

Within its boundaries, a narrative often uses a metaphor to connect the purpose, data (blogs, journals, recordings, etc.), and research on a personal level. A metaphor may come in many guises, and it is up to the narrator to find a one that suits. A metaphor in narrative inquiry may be seen as a quest (Conle, 2000), as water (Li, 1991), or even as construction paper (Valentini, 2010). I appreciate Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) ‘soup’ metaphor. Soups can change with their ingredients, containers, spices, and consumers. Indeed, the most die-hard soup lover will be able to recognize borscht from goulash, and the authors admit that each ‘narrative pot’ of soup may have different ingredients (p. 155). I pondered what type of metaphor would suit my purpose. What metaphor would embrace the struggles, joys, and learning that I have experienced?

³ I will explain this concept further in Chapter 4, which is entitled “What to take home.”

Since I relocated from Edmonton, Canada to Shanghai, China it seemed that ‘travel’ would be a perfect metaphor. Like Clandinin and Connelly’s soup, the ingredients or types of travel could be varied: business, pleasure, visiting friends or family, study, research, or a combination of the five. The ingredients that one has for travel will dictate how one sees it, and when one has time to ‘taste’ some of the culture and environment. When one lands—finally ‘tasting the soup’—potential disappointments and excitements may set in: The luggage didn’t arrive, the taxi driver is smoking, the exchange rate is much better than it was on departure, the weather is perfect or horrible. But these unexpected turns may shape us into more wise, accepting, and understanding people.

Brief Notes on Travel

“The reality of travel seldom matches the daydreams. . . . When we look at pictures of places we want to go and see, we are prone to forget one crucial thing: that we will have to take ourselves along with us.” (De Botton, 2011, p. 52)

Travel is something that people love to do, but many are fearful to take the first step. Traveling means something different for every person. For some, it is like going to the nearest lake for a picnic, and for others, it is an exotic safari to the Kalahari Desert. In fact, most people have already traveled somewhere, whether it is visiting a relative in a nearby town or flying across the world to Timbuktu. I like to think of travel in a tripartite form consisting of a departure, an arrival, and finally a return home. The departure can be characterized as saying good-bye to familiar surroundings; the arrival is an acceptance and letting go of personal, cultural, and societal boundaries; the return is where the

traveler speaks of distant lands, new insights, and hopefully incorporates the new experiences into the comforts of home amongst family and friends.

I have done my best to connect my story to music education, and I hope that it will enrich the practice and experience of music educators who read it. The real traveler, as well as the researcher, is interested in observing, describing, and leading towards “greater humanity, civility, and a love for what is good, true, and beautiful” (Jorgenson, 2009, p. 80). By involving myself in this narrative research project, my learning, teaching, and musicing was prompted to change, adapt, and evolve. We all need to pack up and go, but the most difficult part is actually doing it. Perhaps it is done through engaging oneself in understanding where one has come from, and where one will go as a result. But what does one bring on a trip of self-exploration? The following chapter will explore trip preparations and the actual departure.

Chapter Two: My Departure

Therefore the wise, traveling all day,

Do not lose sight of their baggage.

Though there are beautiful things to be seen,

They remain unattached and calm. (Lao Tzu, trans. 2007, Chapter 26)

Personal Luggage: What Should I Take With Me?

Traveling long distances requires the traveler to do a few things before leaving, and one of these is preparing luggage. There is both a good type of luggage and a bad. A good type will contain those items that are essential: a change of clothes, underwear, and socks; swimwear and a towel for hot countries; a passport, cash, phrasebook, and journal; and an emergency first-aid kit. These things assist the traveler when the going gets rough, and, in my experience, I have found that they are indispensable. On the other hand there are items that might weigh the traveler down: jeans (hot, sweaty, and heavy in the summer; cold, sweaty, and frigid in the winter), bulky travel guides, hair dryers, too many pairs of shoes, and enormous luggage. A travel list will change from person to person and place to place. What has worked for me might not work for another traveler headed to the same destination. In my story, my ‘carry-on’ bag has the things that I need to access right away; my ‘checked-in’ bag is the bulk of who I am, and it weighs a ton.

The Carry-on Bag

“Why narrative? Because experience.” (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 601)

“People who write are always writing about their lives” (Richardson, 2001, p. 34).

People love a good story. I love writing stories, reading stories, and listening to stories. Psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists tell their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), so why not music educators (Bowman, 2006)? The problem is that many music educators have had very little practice in writing their stories. Where does one start? How does one take disparate fragments of a life and make sense of them in a way that both academics and laity will understand and value? Frequently on this journey, the information swirling around my head left me paralyzed as to what I to write.

I still remember some of my most enjoyable moments in elementary school because they were creative writing projects. Normally the task would be along the lines of “What did I do on my summer vacation?” or “What I would do if I had all the money in the world?” but it did not matter what the task was. What mattered was that there was no right or wrong answer to hold me back. How freeing it was for me to take hold of the pen and write! Telling my narrative with the metaphor of travel is very similar. However, a narrative is, at its base, a creative process with limited boundaries. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that “the narrative inquirer does not prescribe general applications and uses, but rather creates texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications” (p. 42). These boundaries have been described so as to make sure the narrative has shape, logic, and form (Bowman, 2006; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Conway, 2003; Demethra & Nash, 2011). Narrative texts have to be relevant to what the narrator needs to explain. Therefore, I anticipated that I would be both the researcher and the object of the research. Dunbar-Hall (2009) explains:

[A narrative] requires movement in and out of focus as the researcher reflects on her/his multiple identities (as cultural insider/outsider, as learner/teacher, as researcher/researched) and how they affect research in the field and decisions to be made in the writing of research reports. (p. 175)

One might speculate that being both the research object as well as the researcher would be simple. After all, how hard can it be to tell one's own story? Personally, I have found the process both challenging and engaging. I have struggled to connect my subjective thoughts with an objective audience. However, I could not put every anecdote into my narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advise that "in writing narrative research texts, we must be mindful of balancing the tensions of writing within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, of writing in ways that narratively capture the lived experiences, and of balancing these with audience" (p. 154). This process of balancing the narrative research texts reminds me that music educators are not only lifelong learners and reflective practitioners (Elliott, 1995), but also risk takers. Music educators can take risks to expand their musical borders in order to learn, live, and love music even more.

"We learn about education thinking about life, and we learn about life from thinking about education" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Learning the GuQin was just a means to an end, and it is a little—yet important—part of my life. After choosing to study the GuQin, my narrative and I were on our way to break down and open up my cultural and educational barriers.

The Checked-in Bag: Defining My Culture and Music

Every year my family would alternate summer vacations between Kananaskis Country and the Okanagan Valley, confined in a car together for hours on end on both the outbound and inbound journeys. Canadians have a love of road trips. Well, at least the Canadians who grew up on, or near, the prairies did. For me, the best part of the trip wasn't the postcard landscapes that would pass by the tinted windows of our marine-blue Chrysler Dynasty, but my Dad's 45rpm mix-tapes. It would take me years to figure out that the music on the mix-tapes wasn't from the year 1945, but that it was the speed of the records themselves.

While most of the children my age were listening to New Kids on the Block, I was getting a different kind of music education. At the age of 13, I found my Dad's record-stash and started to unearth the collection record by record and listen to the music in all its unedited vinyl glory. Even to this day, I am unraveling what those songs were. For example, I had no idea that Elvis Presley was responsible for "In the Ghetto," that The Byrds sang "My Back Pages," that "Bella Linda" was originally "Balla Linda" by Lucio Battisti, and that my favourite songs were from a band called The Beatles. If I hear one of the 100-something songs from my Dad's mix-tapes, I freeze in my tracks. I remember the simplicity, happiness, and wonder of my childhood. Maybe some people remember their childhood by reviewing diaries, pictures, or hanging out and chatting about times past. I remember my childhood mostly by its musics.

(journal entry, September 20, 2010)

When I look back at the music that shaped my childhood, I wonder how much of

an influence it has had on my learning of musics unfamiliar to me. Before leaving Canada for China with my new found intent to study the GuQin, I asked myself these questions:

1. What will allow me to grasp the essence of GuQin music, and in what ways might I interpret this new music through Western methods?
2. How might it matter if I only interpret the music in one (familiar) way?
3. When and how does my past influence my present, and how might I become more conscious of its effects?

These are important questions, and they are understood by examining my past, both musically and culturally. Barrett and Stauffer (2012) elaborate:

What we understand and know, though constructed in social and cultural transactions, is unique and individual; no one person has the same experiences as another, even though some of our experiences may be concurrent or shared. How we understand and know, though thoroughly embedded in social and cultural contexts, is also as unique as our individual sensory capacities, our particular contexts, and our embodied minds. In other words, what and how we know—even who we are—is as complex as the web of our individual capacities, social relationships, cultural concepts, and physical environments; and, as continuous, fluid, and transactional as the experiences we have in that web. (p. 6)

What I know is a mix of my past, present, and future:

I really dislike performing. Every time that I have to perform, I feel like a child being dragged off to wash the dishes or empty the trash. When I was young, a performance would happen twice a year on a grand piano and in front of people,

which I found terribly intimidating. At home our family had a Yamaha upright with very light-weighted keys, so the grand piano looked and felt like I was playing an elephant. Performing isn't for everybody, but it is a part of musicing. I tell my students that it is essential that musicians perform, even though it petrifies many. (journal entry, February 3, 2011)

Every music teacher has experience—both good and bad—with performing, composing, arranging, improvising, practicing, listening, teaching and learning. But what makes teachers and musicians do what they do? Some musicians excel at improvising and some cannot play a note without music notation in front of them. I brought up these two examples of my past to briefly examine both musical ‘transference’ and ‘enculturation.’ Freud described transference as being “a universal phenomenon of the human mind that dominates our relationship to our environment” (as cited in Richo, 2008, p.8). Transference loosely means something that has been transferred from the past and affects the present. Normally transference is mentioned in psychology as something emotional that is passed on by parents to their children. In this case, the term ‘musical transference’ seems more pertinent.

Enculturation could be described as “conscious and unconscious acquisition of culturally fixed understandings” (Morrison, et al., 2008, p. 119). My musical enculturation occurred on family vacations, when listening to the radio, and while in concert halls and classrooms, to name a few spaces and places where music occurred for me. Indeed, the things I learned when I was a child, both personally and culturally, affect how I learn and respond to music today. I asked myself: If I try to challenge my

‘culturally fixed understandings,’ how will I be able to challenge myself in positive ways?

To my joy, when I started to learn about the GuQin before flying to China, I found out that it is a contemplative instrument and not a performance instrument. It could be performed if needed, but the GuQin is played mostly for self-reflection and mindfulness. Kraus (1989) clarifies:

The music of the (*qin*) is quiet and complex, with literary titles alluding to [Mandarin] culture. The (*qin*) player [aspires] to the Confucian goal of inner cultivation, to reach a refined state of mind that [can] not easily be shared with another. (It) [is] thus not an instrument for public performance but rather for the private musings of the learned amateur. (p. 20)

At once, my negative transference of performing was put at ease. The GuQin seemed to fit my past, present, and future very well! I could learn this new instrument without worrying about being put into a situation in which I was not comfortable. I believe “in the value and use of music to foster inter-cultural acceptance and understanding” (Veblen, 2005, p. 312). It is not enough to simply read a book or attend a workshop to receive professional development. Music educators, in my view, need to question their enculturation and musical transferences in order to forward for themselves their environments, their futures, and their students.

Music curricula around the world are changing. Even in China, which has a rich 6000-year-old history of civilization and music, the push for more contemporary music is becoming more and more apparent (Ho & Law, 2004). Here in Canada and elsewhere in the West, there is a current drive in music education to diversify music practices,

performance, listening, and composition. Global musics are becoming more and more important, but training in music education is still not commensurate with the changing needs of the world. The music teacher needs to adapt successfully and authentically to incorporate cross-cultural, community-based, contemporary and other forms of music into the established curricula.

One Last Item To Add: Global Musics

“While teachers cannot be expected to be skilled in all the musics of the world, they must be sensitive to many and skilled in at least one.” (Swanwick, as cited in Regeleski, 2000, p.28).

I never grew up knowing about global music in school. The closest I ever came was a Grade 6 field trip to a First Nations reserve near Edmonton. I was captivated by the sounds (how high they can sing!), the rhythms (accents, ostinatos, improvisations), the meanings (why are they singing about the trees and the falcons?), and the complete uniqueness of it all. Wade (2004) states that both musicians and music educators need to “transcend boundaries of various sorts – ethnic, gender, national racial, class, stylistic, and others” (p. 145). I have traveled to many diverse cultures and tried to experience their musics with the same openness that I did when I was a child. I tried to buy a relevant book on the instruments or musics of each country to which I traveled. The guidebooks that tourists haul around hardly ever do culture any justice. Luckily, in my undergraduate degree, I majored in history, and I was trained to first search out primary sources (interviews, pictures, personal stories, etc.). The best strategy I learned was to ask people about their musics, about their lives, and about their histories. Traveling to a new location involves not just a change of surroundings, but also a change in mentality. I

had to open up my boundaries and be willing to experience every aspect of a culture about which I knew nothing, beside the little I learned from guidebooks and history books. The only way to learn something, as most musicians know, is by actually doing it. My “doing” of global music had to do with removing myself from my comfortable environment to one that was filled with excitement, mystery, and insight.

The Bags are Packed, And So Let’s Go!

It seems to me now that at the beginning of my travels I was accompanied by my past and present, and that I was hopeful of a future that included a new music to add to my musicing repertoire. The knowledge about narrative inquiry that I was acquiring acted as a pilot for my research, helping me to have a basis from which to record, listen, and write about my happenings in a three-dimensional space. My departure from Canada signified a new beginning for me, both as a musician and a teacher. I was about to assume the role of a student once more, and I was fascinated as to what that would entail. How would my cultural upbringing influence the way I reacted to learning something new? In what ways would I be open to struggling and then (hopefully) succeeding in this learning adventure? These questions I try to answer in the following chapter, where I recount what it is like to be a cross-cultural music traveler who is learning the GuQin.

Chapter Three: Landing and Expanding

Shanghai is a bewildering place. On one side of the street you'll see an old man walking backwards, clapping forwards. On the other side, a couple is posing for wedding pictures in outfits that would make Elton John blush. Normally Chinese wedding couples opt for mismatching colours, complete with top hats, sunglasses in winter, and high-top shoes. Shanghai is a unique blend of the old and the new, the strange and the familiar, the forbidden and the approved. Each day brings new experiences, new frustrations, and new joys. However, upon arriving in Shanghai, I knew next to nothing of Chinese culture and history aside from what a few books and travel guides had told me. (journal entry, April 29, 2011)

The Cross-Cultural Music Traveler

Experience is a riverbed,

Its source hidden, forever flowing:

Its entrance, the root of the world,

The Way moves within it:

Draw upon it; it will not run dry. (Lao-tsu, trans. 1995, Chapter 6)

In traveling, the most difficult times are often remembered with great fondness.

When things do not go as planned, the traveler needs to accept what happens and try to learn from the experience. Traveling is something that requires an open mind, where it is better to not-know than to know, according to many Eastern philosophies. As Lao-Tsu

(2007)⁴ says, “Those who know do not talk, and talkers do not know” (p. 128).

Sometimes it is better to expand cultural horizons than to assume that everything will make sense. I thought that if I imposed my own cultural influences upon another culture, I could be in danger of not seeing the bigger picture of that new experience. By contrast, if I disavowed my own culture, I could be in danger of losing myself.

Traveling is fresh, exciting, and fascinating. Upon arriving, many tourists have their bilingual dictionaries at hand, eager to speak and learn a few words of a foreign language. Some words are learned, but then they realize that nearly everybody speaks a little bit of English. The dictionary is put away – or left abandoned on a table in a hostel – and English takes over. The adventurous meals of miscellaneous delicacies turn into comfort food at McDonalds. Commuting in cramped public buses with chickens is replaced by day trips in air-conditioned tourist buses. But can a tourist be blamed for wanting safety and comfort? Perhaps the traveler could find a middle path of balancing the need for both home and adventure, without sacrificing one for the other.

Beginning to play a new musical instrument is very similar to traveling. At first one is ecstatic to begin. The feel of the instrument is new, its peculiarities fascinating, and making musical sounds is enticing. Almost every time one sits down with the instrument, wonder fills the air. One practices faithfully until the “Eureka!” moment. But then, after a while, something changes. Csikszentmihalyi (2008) surmises that “unfortunately, this natural connection between growth and enjoyment tends to disappear with time. . . . The excitement of mastering new skills gradually wears out” (p. 47). How

⁴ There have been many translations of the Tao Te Ching, by Lao-Tsu. I have chosen some translations that I feel speak to me the most, which are detailed in the reference section.

can a task that provided so much satisfaction turn into one that results in boredom? How can one sustain the natural connection between growth and enjoyment? The enjoyment, according to Elliott (1995), has to do with self-knowledge. Elliott elaborates:

What this means for music teaching and learning is that the values of MUSIC result from learning to make and listen for musical works well – from the deliberate and sustained pursuit of musical competency, proficiency, and expertise. To pursue musical excellence is to pursue self-growth, constructive knowledge, and enjoyment. (emphasis in original, pp. 133-134)

Elliott is saying that musicians should strive to learn more than just how to play the instrument. While learning the GuQin I had to shed some of my entrenched Western practice and performance habits to accept, feel, and internalize the music I was learning. I reasoned that if I were to study China—the cultures, the histories, the languages, and the musics—my understanding of the GuQin’s role in modern Chinese society would deepen and continue long after. A traveller is faced with many choices along the way—where to stay, what to eat, what to say, and how to act. But it is through mindful choices that the traveler, just like the learner, can continue a quest for deeper understanding. There has to be a balance between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar in order for the learning process to be sustained (Czikszentmihalyi, 2008). As noted earlier, I had to “shed some of my entrenched Western practice and performance habits.” But, in order for me to really sustain what I was learning, I also had to consider my cultural upbringing as well. I could not ignore where I came from, or else I might have ended up overlooking the rich musical heritage of my homeland, one that could deepen the experience of the new musical practice into which I was being inducted. A traveler could do the same. Instead

of making a concerted effort to reject or abandon every facet of his home culture—which I have found causes the traveler more harm than good—why not allow himself to indulge every once in a while? What harm would it cause the traveler to eat a piece of pizza or to watch a movie in English? In my case, would it be wrong for me to try to learn a blues scale on the GuQin?

My travels with the GuQin would not have been complete if I had not incorporated in my journey how I learned music over the years, in some form or another. By including “my musical culture” in the learning process, I found that my experience of learning the GuQin was both new and familiar. I knew what it was like to start a new instrument. I still remember how awkward the guitar seemed when I picked it up for the first time: Trying to wrap my wrist around the neck of the guitar seemed nearly impossible, but after a couple of weeks I was already strumming chords with ease. However, nothing prepared me for an instrument that almost resembled the guitar, but played like a violin on a table, without a bow. The notes also looked alien, and I was tempted to learn by Western notation because of its close familiarity to me. But I chose to cast aside my fears and trust myself on my journey.

This journey into the rich musical tradition of the GuQin was informed by Clandinin and Connelly’s (2006) three-dimensional space: “the personal and social (interaction) along one dimension; past, present and future (continuity) along a second dimension; place (situation) along a third dimension” (p. 47). In other words, my research was conducted by: observing my interaction with the Chinese, and their rich, bustling culture; respecting my own way of connecting my stories, research, and

observations through time; and knowing my place in music education by learning a new instrument, and what that might mean for the profession.

The drive for musical experience prompted me to learn the GuQin, and these experiences allowed me to challenge myself. This chapter further explores my experiences with the GuQin through examination of the following topics: language barriers, finding a teacher, the GuQin, struggling with notation, rhythm and time, and a brief history of the GuQin.

The Language Barrier

When I came to China, I knew nothing about the language. I didn't even know how to say "Ni-hao!" ("Hello!"). As I studied the GuQin day-by-day and week-by-week my comprehension of Mandarin improved drastically. I became able to order things to eat, have conversations about life, and give directions for where I needed to go. My Mandarin still is nowhere near being fluent, but learning just a couple of words helped connect me with the GuQin and its music at a deeper level.

Mandarin is said to be one of the most difficult languages to learn. Grammatically speaking, I did not find Mandarin difficult at all. Take verb tenses, for example. There are many ways to refer to past actions, but most Mandarin speakers will say "Yesterday" in lieu of a more complicated verb form. For example, instead of "I went to the store to buy groceries," it would be, "Yesterday I go to the store to buy groceries." To make things even easier, the future tense is the same: "Next month, I go to the store to buy groceries." Grammar aside, the voicing of Mandarin is a bit trickier. There are four tones to consider: high, ascending, descending then ascending, descending. Thank goodness I was not tasked with learning Hong Kong Cantonese (7

tones) or Guangzhou Cantonese (9 tones). Tonalities aside, I experienced the language more like a song. Listening to Mandarin speakers offend each other verbally is like listening to a complex fugue: the same theme is introduced and interlaced over and over until the grand finale. On the other hand, there is no worry if one gets the tones mixed up. As with most languages, context is the key to understanding.

The most difficult aspect of Mandarin is the written language. Its history and development is extensive: There are more than 40,000 characters, each of which has a different meaning when paired with other characters. For example, the name for music in Chinese is *Yin-Yueh*: *Yin* means “tone,” *Yueh* means “music.” Fung (1994) believes that the two words together define humankind. According to Fung,

Sheng (sound), *Yin* (tone), and *Yueh* (music) meant three different things. To know the *Sheng* but not to know the *Yin* is to be an animal. To know the *Yin* but not to know the *Yueh* is to be a common person. To know the *Yueh* is to be a noble, superior, or highly educated human. Thus, the knowing of *Yin* and the knowing of *Yueh* are uniquely human capabilities. This hierarchical distinction suggests not only that tone is more than sound, and music is more than tone, but also that *Yueh* (music) is, and must be, part of the education process. Although only human beings are capable of knowing *Yin* and *Yueh*, knowing the *Yin* (tone) alone is not good enough to be superior. Without *Yueh*, one could never become educated. (Fung, 1994, p. 48, emphasis mine)

In other words, *Yueh* is internal: what we feel, and what we express. *Yin* is external: tones, scales, and organization. But one cannot exist without the other, because

there would be no music. Understanding a small portion of the intricate structure of Mandarin helped me bridge the gap between musics, cultures, and even languages.

Finding a Teacher

“If music educators are to understand Chinese music, they must turn to those Chinese who have an intimate knowledge of the kaleidoscope of Chinese musics to help in understanding the music that would otherwise be foreign to them.”

(Fung, 1994, p. 51)

When I arrived in Shanghai I knew I had to find a music teacher as soon as possible. Wasiak’s (2009) example of “cross-cultural collaboration” was at the front of my mind. I was searching for not only a music teacher, but also someone who could bring “deep cultural knowledge into the collaboration” (p. 218). To continue the travel metaphor, I was looking for a tour guide. I needed a guide who would safely allow me to express my own culture and musics while respecting and embracing a culture and music that was unfamiliar. A “culture bearer” (Burton, 2002; Wasiak, 2009) was the tour guide I needed for my travels. Wasiak (2009) explains: “The culture bearer serves as a guide as one crosses over into the world of another” (p. 218). I expected that Shanghai would have an abundance of culture bearers, but sadly this was not the case. In my search for a culture bearer, I learned that the GuQin is a very difficult instrument to teach. A GuQin teacher needs to know the historical, poetic, and cultural significance of each piece, as well as understand the context and performance of over 1000 notation symbols. I also learned that the scarcity of teachers could be attributed to the outcomes of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution (1967-1976), which were more drastic for the GuQin than for any other traditional instrument (Kraus, 1989); hence, the few GuQin teachers in

Shanghai. Another horizontally-stringed instrument, the GuZheng has 21 strings (Jie, 2010). Interestingly, the GuZheng was not targeted for being one of the ‘four olds’ that the Cultural Revolution was trying to extinguish (Kraus, 1989). This could have contributed to the GuZheng’s modern popularity and accessibility to its repertoire and teachers. The GuQin, on the other hand, was the instrument associated with Confucius, and was targeted immediately after the Cultural Revolution began.

My search for a music teacher began with a meeting I had with a music education professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. The room where we met was oppressively hot and humid. “The government refuses to turn on the air conditioning until the beginning of the semester,” Ms. Xu⁵ explained. The semester wasn’t going to start for another two weeks! The room was probably at least 40 degrees Celsius, pulsating with heat from the cement walls. There was a pool of sweat forming on the rubbery seat on which I sat. I explained that I was looking for a unique experience that would most certainly occur if I were to learn the GuQin. Ms. Xu was interested in why I wanted to learn the GuQin, and not the GuZheng. I replied that I had a good feeling about the GuQin and would prefer to learn it even if it were to prove difficult to find a teacher. Ms. Xu said she knew of someone who might be willing to take on another student. I took the contact information and was on my way to learn, experience, and share. As a traveler shares pictures and stories about his home with people he meets along the way, I was ready to share my musical hopes and dreams with my future teacher.

After rearranging our meeting date around 5 times, in typical Shanghai fashion,

Azura - my future GuQin teacher - was earlier than I (which is not in typical

⁵ All of the names mentioned in this project are pseudonyms in order to protect identity.

Shanghai fashion). I had a picture in my mind of a 60-year-old woman who would have tales of the Cultural Revolution to share. My soon-to be teacher was a lot younger than I had imagined, around 20 years old. Azura greeted me with a warm smile and a firm handshake. Azura had a very calm demeanor, which complimented her appearance: simple, cute, and quiet, both in fashion and in language. (journal entry, September 6, 2010)

Upon first meeting, I could sense that Azura and I would be a good fit as teacher and student. I trusted Azura and could see that we both had similar understandings of the world around us. We talked about Eastern and Western philosophy, Chinese history, and why both of us were so interested in the GuQin. Azura seemed very knowledgeable in Chinese history, etymology, and music. She also had a keen interest in Western thought and practice in both music and culture. I was very excited to have Azura as guide, culture-bearer, and friend on my travels. As Bowman (2007) elaborates, “at the center of all music making and musical experience lies a ‘we,’ a sense of collective identity that powerfully influences individual identity” (p. 109). Indeed, musicians are always working with others, and one of the most fascinating of all communal activities in music is the relationship between teacher and student.

Experiencing the GuQin

The GuQin is said by some to date back to the 11-16th Century BCE, giving it a history of around 4000 years. The first historical records of the GuQin lie in early, pictographic Chinese characters. The earliest known surviving instruments were taken from tombs of high-ranking officials in 5th-3rd Century BCE. Even the

name Gu (Old/Ancient/Respected) and Qin (Instrument) are indicative of its place in Chinese history. (journal entry, November 17, 2010)

I found Wade's (2004) "thinking about" examples, in particular, "thinking about" instruments, pitch (sound), time (rhythm), and issues (history), helpful in negotiating my approach to the GuQin. They provided the necessary framework for me to both respect my own cultural background and that of the music that I was studying. The following sections will elaborate.

GuQin as instrument

Typical guidebook photos of Chinese traditional instruments include one of an old man sitting with his Erhu,⁶ long hair growing out of a mole on his chin, his skin weathered and leathery after years of labour on a rice paddy under the sun, and his mouth sporting a Chinese pipe. Nowadays things have changed: The old man has been replaced with young, attractive girls playing electrified Erhus in a frenzied bliss of fast notes, accompanied by thumping techno-like music. The GuQin is far removed from the social phenomenon just described. Despite the fact that the GuQin occupies an important place in Chinese history and sometimes even appears in popular culture, the instrument struggles to be known. At one point in the Cultural Revolution of China, leaders of musical institutions "regarded China's traditional music as old-fashioned, or even as reactionary impediment to national progress" (Kraus, 1989, pp. 100-101). There are no flashing lights, no cute Chinese girls playing, nor any thumping electronic music. I agree

⁶ A bowed, two-stringed instrument sometimes adorned with snakeskin on the resonators (Jie, 2010).

with Wade's (2004) statement that "when people design and craft instruments, they both express cultural values and create musical practices through them" (p. 27).

GuQin as object

I knew of many Chinese traditional instruments – their looks and sounds – but I wasn't too keen on any of them until, while exploring a random Chinese instrument site, I saw the simple design of an instrument made of hutong: a dark, solid, resonant wood primarily used to build temples for emperors. There were only 7-strings, and its dimensions were 3-feet by 1-foot,⁷ which is very much like my beloved guitar. Again, I fell in love with a musical instrument. (journal entry, August 15, 2010)

China's Han Dynasty (226BCE – 206CE) is responsible for creating the design of the GuQin that is used today. The GuQin is based on these 7 principles:

1. The length of the body is to be 3 feet, 6 inches, and 5 minutes in Chinese lengths. Three hundred and sixty-five degrees symbolizes the turning of a full year in the heavens, as well as the number of days per year.
2. The upper and lower surfaces are to connect the heavens to the earth.
3. There is a head, body, and end parts, commonly known as the forehead, waist and back, connecting the instrument to human beings.
4. There are two sound holes on the bottom (back) of the GuQin, symbolizing "dragon" and "phoenix" pools. The dragon is a masculine mythical creature (yang), symbolizing good luck, fortune, and wealth. The phoenix is the king of

⁷ This translates into approximately 91 centimeters by 30 centimeters in Western measurements.

the birds and connected with the feminine side of Chinese mythology (yin). What is interesting is that most Western stringed instruments have their sound holes on the front to project the sound outward. The GuQin's sound goes downward and mostly toward the musician. This visibly shows the nature of the GuQin: An instrument designed for self-reflection; not created for performance.

5. The thirteen markings (similar to a Guitar's fret-board), respective to their natural harmonics, indicate the 12 months of the year plus one leap year.

6. Unlike the violin (and most Western stringed instruments), which has a narrow fingerboard on which to play, the GuQin is played on the full surface with the strings widely spread out.

7. The strings are of equal length, starting with the 7th string – the smallest string – closest to the musician. Western stringed instruments, minus the harp, have the largest string closest to the musician. Some have said that placing the small string closest to the musician is out of “respect,” allowing the melody to be closest to the body and soul. (<http://www.silkqin.com/02qnpu/05tydq/ty1d.htm#qinmian>)

As mentioned earlier, to me, a GuQin resembles a slide guitar. At first glance, I pictured Jeff Healey performing a rendition of “Little Wing” by Jimi Hendrix. From the zither family of instruments, the GuQin has always been viewed as a status symbol: “Many wealthy Chinese who could not play the *qin* would hang one on the wall as a badge of status, not unlike later bourgeois displays of elegant but unplayed pianos” (emphasis in original, Kraus, 1989, p. 20). Even now, thirty-six years after the end of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution, I see the GuQin hung up in expensive restaurants, displayed in Chinese schools (I have never heard of a public or private school where it is

taught), and occasionally hanging on a wall in somebody's home. Truly, it is a beautiful instrument to look at. But what about playing it?

The GuQin is not traditionally seen as an ensemble instrument, but currently there are collaborations, some better than others, that are occurring between players of traditional and Western instruments.⁸ One day I learned that Azura had performed in a Jazz ensemble:

P: Really? I didn't know the GuQin was played with other instruments.

Azura: Yes. This isn't the first time I have performed with this group, either.

P: But why didn't you invite me?

Azura: I didn't know you would like to listen to me play with a Jazz ensemble.

(journal entry, February 13, 2011)

It appears that the role of an instrument can change depending on whose viewpoint is being entertained. Take the piano, for example. In order to gain acceptance at an elite university, such as Harvard, Oxford, or Cambridge, many Chinese parents urge their children to achieve a very high standard of musicianship in Western musics—predominantly on the piano (Huang, 2011). It is also estimated that “36 million Chinese children study the piano today, compared to 6 million in the United States” (ibid, p. 162). Imagine if 36 million children were to learn the GuQin in the United States, and only 6 million in China. It seems a bit absurd. I agree with Bruno Nettl when he wrote that, “the intensive imposition of Western music and musical thought upon the rest of the

⁸ When referring to Western instruments, I mean to include both traditional Classical instruments (piano, violin, cello, guitar, etc.) as well as popular instruments (keyboard, drum-set, electric bass, electric guitar, etc.)

world [is] the most important event in the last century of music history” (as cited in Kraus, 1989, p. 30). A good example of this phenomenon is the way China used Western music both as an ally and foe during the Cultural Revolution, which lasted from 1966 to 1976 (Fairbank, 1987; Kraus, 1989). Mao Zedong once said:

Learn to play the piano. In playing the piano all ten fingers are in motion: it won't do to move some fingers only and not others. But if all ten fingers press down at once, there is no melody. To produce good music, the ten fingers should move rhythmically and in co-ordination. A Party Committee should keep a firm grasp on its central task and at the same time, around the central task, it should unfold the work in other fields. . . . Some play the piano well and some badly, and there is a great difference in the melodies they produce. Members of Party Committees must learn to play the piano well. (as cited in Kraus, 1989, p. 78)

I feel that the piano is something that the World places on a pedestal. Although the history of the piano is relatively new in China,⁹ the importance of the instrument to modern Chinese society is vital. Unfortunately, my experience with the piano has left me with a kind of stigma, which is steeped in virtuosity, performance, and status. By so many teachers forcing public performance and a drive for virtuosity on their students who play it, I feel that the piano has been dishonoured. It is for this reason I chose to learn an instrument that is not historically considered to be a performance instrument. To reflect further on our conversation about roles that instruments play, Azura assumed that if I wasn't gaining an authentic experience I would not enjoy the GuQin as much. Perhaps

⁹ “The piano was called the gangqin, or the steel qin, even though it is in many ways antithetical to China's traditional art” (Kraus, 1989, p. 23).

she was trying to protect my image of the GuQin: An image of something that is sacred, ancient, and isolated from other musics. But I now know that how an instrument is viewed will be different from person to person. I still view the GuQin as something that is very personal and private. Azura, on the other hand, feels that she needs to carefully advertise the instrument, and show its versatility not only with Western musics, but also with other musics as well.

Ironically, without the pressure of having to perform, I felt free to play the GuQin for my friends and family. I already have a few times. It is interesting how my own cultural boundaries have changed. If I had wanted to play the GuQin for the rest of my life, and have the music solely for myself, that would have been accepted and considered normal. Consider the ancient story of one of China's most respected musicians, who was a master of the GuQin:

According to legend, in the Spring and Autumn Period there lived a lyrist Yu Boya, who was extremely skilled in music performance. One day his performance in the open air was overheard by a woodchopper Zhong Ziqi, who happened to pass by. Zhong Ziqi immediately understood that Yu Boya was describing lofty mountains and turbulent running water through his performance. Amazed to have found someone with an understanding of his music, Yu Boya developed a close friendship with Zhong Ziqi. Later when Zhong Ziqi died, Yu Boya was in such deep grief that he broke the strings and the musical instrument. Ever since then he quit performing music. (<http://arts.cultural-china.com/en/96A543A1001.html>)

There are two things that surprise me when reading this. The first one is how Boya's friend, Ziqi, was not even invited to listen to the music. Ziqi happened to pass by,

sit down, and observe. Boya was sitting quietly, playing what he was feeling (or composing) at the time. Maybe Boya was in grief, wondering, “To what extent am I going to play and not have anybody understand my music but me?” Or maybe he was not thinking anything. Maybe Boya was fully involved in what he was doing, not aware of time, or even hearing a humble wood-cutter like Ziqi walk up to listen.¹⁰ Ziqi understood right away, listening patiently. The GuQin is meant for educating the self in order to reach out to society as a result of the education (Confucius, 2008). Indeed, the need to share music is inevitable. In addition to sharing my playing of the GuQin with others, my journey with the GuQin has guided me beyond the performance expectations of most Western instruments to become a more reflective, culturally and socially minded musician.

The GuQin is a complex instrument. The complexity is in the fact that the simpler the music and the simpler the concept of the music, the better the piece is. The Taoist way, which will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4, states that music is a continuation of the beauty of nature, and nature is a continuation of the beauty of music. Yet if the reason for our playing is to mimic nature, then why play anything at all? If the piece can be expressed through sounds that already exist, then why make the notes heard twice? Kraus (1989) elaborates that, “Qin culture developed the ideal of music so intimate and so refined that it was soundless” (p. 20). Music is ubiquitous in our world; we find it in coffee shops, cars, kitchens, restaurants, bookstores, and many other places. In my opinion, the pop music of the West has influenced nearly every musical culture to

¹⁰ Boya was possibly living within flow. To live with flow is “[to live a life] that is characterized by complete absorption in what one does” (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2005, p. 89).

play music loud and often. I like to imagine a world where silence is considered musical perfection. Azura recounted to me a story of a GuQin master not having any strings on his instrument and not needing to play any notes (*Yin*) because he felt the notes already existed perfectly in nature (journal entry, October 26, 2010).

Azura and I talked about the concept of “no-sound” over tea. Tea, strangely enough, is one of the best ways to connect to China’s culture. A session of tea can last for hours, and the conversation usually starts and finishes with the topic of tea. Our dialogue would set the pace for our lesson, and I was constantly reminded that it was not the notes (*Yin*) that mattered, but the feeling (*Yueh*) and the silences (no-sound).

Struggling With Notation

“Frequently in Western music. . . musicians (pay) a lot of attention to the score, sometimes with so much attention that the creativity of the music making process is overlooked” (Lee & Shen, 1999, p. 100). Azura reminded me that the notation of the GuQin is only a rough guide of what needs to be played. Like a travel guide, which suggests possible itineraries for its reader, GuQin notation is like a path from which the musician can take a detour if desired. The musician needs feeling, emotion, and expression: The *Yueh*. The notes (*Yin*) are there for interpretation.

GuQin notation has connections to the development of the modern Chinese language dating back around 4000 years. Playing GuQin notation is not simple. Traditionally it is read up-to-down, right-to-left. To add to the confusion of what and how to play, more than 1000 symbols are available in GuQin notation which describe tremolos, trills, and other ornaments, what fingers are used, how they are used, the way

the hands are held, and how the strings should be tuned (Lee & Shen, 1999). An example of the types of trills used in GuQin notation is briefly explained by Kraus (1989):

There is the *changyin*, a drawn-out vibrato, that should recall “the cry of a dove announcing rain;” the *xiyin*, a thin vibrato, that should make one think of “confidential whispering;” the *yuyin*, swinging vibrato, that should evoke the image of “fallen blossoms floating down with the stream,” etc. Remarkable is the *dingyin* – the vacillating movement of the finger should be so subtle as to be hardly noticeable. Some handbooks say that one should not move the finger at all, but let the timbre be influenced by the pulsation of the blood in the fingertip, pressing the string down on the board a little more fully and heavily than usual.

(p. 17)

The interpretation of GuQin notation is a complex process, and I was thankful to have Azura as my knowledgeable guide. The meanings used by the masters of the GuQin are even open for interpretation. In *Chinese Musical Instruments* (Sin-yan & Yuan-yuan, 1999), a description of a composition as it had been played by four individual masters of the GuQin, was included. Each example had been transcribed into Western notation for analysis. The results were extremely different one from the other. Each expressed both the *Yin* and the *Yueh* in its own way, and each interpretation was considered as good as the next. However, interpreting the meaning of each symbol in my own way caused me many difficulties.

The difficulties arose in how I heard the music in my head. I sometimes attached a rhythm to compositions, because that is how I envisioned the music I was learning. For example, my knowledge of musical ornaments was limited to that of the baroque era—

trill, mordent, turn, etc. This did not do justice to a vibrato that could invoke an image of a bird singing or a simple heartbeat. Yet despite the difficulties, I discovered many rewards. First, playing music where there is not an exact right or wrong way was freeing. I have always learned the notes to forget them, adding musical expression after mastering the notation. But learning notes on the GuQin worked the other way around. I could express the musicality of the piece *while* learning the notes. Second, this method of notation and its performance helped me to investigate the GuQin more thoroughly. I had to learn more about the language, as well as the historical context of the poems that nearly every piece accompanied.

Time and Rhythm

Approaching music that doesn't have any rhythmic, dynamic, or tempo values is enjoyable, but tricky. Personal reflection, communication, and enlightenment are the goals I have to keep in mind. (journal entry, December 5, 2010)

The music for the GuQin has no rhythm markings. In fact, there are no rhythm suggestions. Rhythm is usually implied in the poetry of the piece, since most (if not all) pieces have a literary element. The title also suggests the tempo or rhythm of the piece. One of the first pieces that I learned is called *Tian Shan*, roughly translated as “God in Nature.” Below is an extract from a conversation I had with my teacher, which exemplifies the manner of learning how a piece should be interpreted:

P: How should I play this? Fast or slow?

Azura: What do you mean? What does the title suggest? Doesn't God imply peace?

Doesn't nature imply peace as well? If you were in a calm forest, away from the

crazy traffic and noise in Shanghai, would you run or walk? (journal entry, December 15, 2010)

I learned from this exchange that I should use the clues found in the title of a composition or any other facet of its literary connections to help me decide on a tempo. Another example can be drawn from the piece called *Jiu Kuang*, “The Drunken Man Song,” which is quite a famous GuQin piece. I have heard many GuQin musicians play this composition and more often than not I hear a fixed rhythm, reminiscent of Paul Desmond’s “Take Five” beat.¹¹ I asked Azura why some have rigidity in their tempi. Should I follow that example? Azura replied,

Have you ever seen a drunk person dance? This piece is not only about a man who is drunk (and potentially high on drugs), but also it is about somebody who is very upset at the political situation. According to the text, this drunken man needs to break free from society. But since he cannot change the system from within, he might as well forget about reality for a while. I hear this song as being more of a sad lament than a happy dance. Also, I have never seen a drunk person dance in time. (ibid, pp. 21-22)

I had to question my emotions, my understandings of the literature and symbols, and my perception of how the rhythm (and non-rhythm) should be played. Why take the GuQin music, “(where) the rhythmic elements and tempo are considered the last items of importance” (Lee & Shen, 1999, p. 88), and pigeonhole them into rigidity? Another layer of cultural differences was shed. Once at a lesson I played a piece that I was working on. Things were going well, until:

¹¹ “Take Five” has five beats per bar, which has a quite different feel than a four beat phrase.

P: Oops. Wrong note.

Azura: What wrong note? I didn't hear anything wrong.

P: Don't you see? Didn't you hear? I played this (strum) instead of that (pluck).

Azura: I both saw and heard what you did, and I liked it because you seemed to play what you were feeling. Did you mean to play it this way?

P: Nope.

Azura: Try to think of how you play it next time. If you want to add what you just did – if it comes naturally to you, if you felt it – then play it. Playing the GuQin is about freeing yourself and allowing yourself to express even the not right notes.

Remember, according to Taoism, the best music is in nature.

(journal entry, January 22, 2011)

The process of determining how to play a piece takes a lot of thought and even more personal reflection. The end result should exemplify simplicity and clarity of expression. If I played a wrong note, my frustration was quickly calmed by a suggestion to use the wrong note as an example of my expression. There was no such thing as a wrong note if one meant to play it that way. If the wrong note added to an idea, emotion, or feel of the piece, then one could consider using it. Sometimes musical accidents turn into epiphanies. There is no perfect way of playing the GuQin. Chinese traditional music experts Lee and Shen (1999) explain:

In Chinese music, the allocation of time and apportioning of space is decided by the amount of thinking involved and the appropriate distribution of weight. The weight in terms of length in time and forcefulness in dynamics are measured

according to the (individual's) perception and not according to that of the composer. (p. 99)

The absence of rhythm and tempo was freeing. When I approached a piece, I did so with respect to the culture around me, the history of the piece, and attention to my own feelings.

The Importance of (the GuQin's) History

Performing a composition on the GuQin is not a free-for-all, in that one can play any note one feels. Rather it is an examination of the true nature of the piece—the history, the story, the literal and figurative meanings—and how one experiences them. . . . Some of China's most important historical figures played the GuQin.¹² In fact, up until the fall of the Chinese empire in 1912, the GuQin was used as a method for judging if officials, both high and low ranking ones, were philosophically, musically, culturally, and morally balanced. Imagine how stunned Emperor PuYi's - the last emperor of China - officials and eunuchs must have been when he demanded to study the piano. (journal entry, January 11, 2011)

Eager to know more about the role of the Cultural Revolution on the GuQin, I spent many hours hunting down sources in Shanghai. Sadly, all of these resources were found in International Schools scattered across the city. Not one single library in Shanghai had information in either English or Chinese. Even the Museum of Oriental Musical Instruments near my apartment on Fengyang Road had no pertinent information. As John King Fairbank (1987) declares, “history is important for understanding the

¹² China's First Emperor (The Yellow Emperor, Huang Di), the ones that followed, Confucius, and Buddha were all said to have played the GuQin.

People's Republic of China but who does anything about it?" (p. ix). At my next lesson I asked Azura where I could find some information. Might she own some books on the present history of the GuQin from her University courses?

"We really didn't learn anything about modern GuQin history, apart from the ancient texts which are important," Azura explained. "All that was in the textbooks about the Cultural Revolution was that the revolution happened between 1966 and 1976." Azura looked up: "There are more books on the cultural revolution written by foreigners. Can you find out some information for me?" (Azura, personal communication, November 25, 2010)

I find it incredible how the role of the culture bearer suddenly shifted. Who would have thought that I would be responsible for helping Azura find out more about the GuQin? The point of this encounter is that history has many sides and many stories. After talking to local Chinese in Shanghai, I understood that the Chinese educational system does not have much information on what happened during the Cultural Revolution.

Learning the GuQin plunged me 'head first' into the history of the GuQin in China. In fact, my thoughts on "why China?" and "why the GuQin?" were fuelled by an interest in history, culture, and society which are all interconnected.

When I hear popular music in Shanghai there is nothing that resembles traditional Chinese music in the slightest way. All I hear are poor, money-driven misinterpretations of bad pop/RnB/soul song writing. Almost every song that I hear sounds like Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Justin Timberlake, Ja Rule, etc., but with a Chinese pop-star on the microphone. Surely this is not where Chinese traditional

music was headed when the first bamboo flute was burned over 4000 years ago!
What connection does sounding like every super-popular pop/RnB/soul group in
North America have with China? (journal entry, August 20, 2010)

I am not saying that Chinese popular music should sound like the Peking Opera, complete with guitars, synthesizers, and DJs, but shouldn't contemporary Chinese pop music contain some remnants of China's ancient, rich musical tapestry? And furthermore, what does this state of affairs say about the commodification of music in a global capitalist world, even in a supposedly communist country like China? This 'flat world' approach also risks flattening how we hear and practice music, right?

Investigating the GuQin helped me to understand the present state of traditional music in China, as well as its more popular forms. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, China has tried to be more open to Western musics. Kraus (1989) elaborates: "The exchange of musics had become one-sided; China imported Western music while Westerners mocked China's" (p. 35). It appears that China is trying to prove itself in the Western musical world, and its traditional music—especially that for the GuQin—seems to be overlooked. In order to understand China today, I needed to look back around 40 years ago and piece together these questions about China's history of music.

Exploring music history, however, is not an easy task. McCarthy (2003) explains that, "music educators typically come to historical research with little or no formal training as historians" (p.121). I am fortunate, however. My first education degree was in history, and I was reminded of the training that I undertook as I researched the history of the GuQin. I learned how to examine primary documents (such as newspapers and interviews) and secondary documents (such as history books and journals) in order to

find what I think of as the objective truth. I also learned that it is a difficult task to balance subjectivity—like being upset at the Cultural Revolution and its effect on the GuQin—and fact.

Speaking more generally, music education is in need of understanding the role that history plays in all musics. Researching history is one thing, but what about connecting it to the classroom? “Creating memorable connections between the past and the present that take on a life of their own in the present is a primary goal of the historian” (ibid, p. 124). The real challenge and joy to approaching history is to help students make connections on their own. Students can then begin to see the correlation to *any* history, may it be about Genghis Khan, the slave trade, or French Canadian history.

I think it is absolutely necessary to examine the history of any music (rap, pop, Afro-beat, baroque, opera, minimalism, etc.) that is studied or taught in school. By learning more about history, one starts to become more of a culture bearer who better understands the position of society and culture. Cross-cultural collaboration starts to make sense. It is not the case of one person knowing and the other person not knowing,¹³ but it is a collaboration between two parties who share their knowledge, experience, and culture. To be able to project oneself into what it was like to live in a particular time, is to somehow empathize with what was going on and why. Music educators should be thinking more about the role of history in the music class. The past left in the past cannot do anything. And vice-versa, I might add...what about listening to (or even performing) the music of a culture or historical period in a social studies class? This is a cross-

¹³ Please refer to Paolo Friere’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

curricular model that is little explored, and yet how much would young people enjoy learning in this interdisciplinary way?

Conclusion

My beginnings with the GuQin were a West-meets-East view. My culture, my music, and my history shaped my travels with the GuQin. Reflecting back on the experience, I realized that it had been more of a *how* to learn rather than a *what* to learn journey. Learning to play an instrument that isn't bound by performance expectations has freed me to really understand a way of musicing that I had not experienced before. The GuQin was familiar to me in that its shape reminded me of a guitar, but unfamiliar in that its performance and interpretation traditions were very different from anything I had heretofore experienced. The more I investigated the history of the GuQin, the more I studied Mandarin, and the more I played pieces and learned the notation symbols and their accompanying poems, the more my philosophy on musicing and music education changed for good. In the following chapter, I will recount my philosophical journey.

Chapter Four: What to take Home— My Philosophy

The wise student hears of the Tao and practices it diligently.

The average student hears of the Tao and thinks about it now and then.

The foolish student hears of the Tao and laughs out loud.

If there were no laughter, the Tao would be not what it is.

(Lao-Tsu, trans. 2012, Chp. 40)

If (one) keeps cherishing (one's) old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new, (one) may be a teacher of others.

(Confucius, trans. 2002, Chp. 11)

In Need of a Philosophical Adaptation

From my very first lesson on the GuQin, I was thrown into the world of Chinese philosophy. My music teacher did not prepare me for this. All of a sudden, my philosophy of music education as well as my views on life and spirituality began to change. Along with learning a global instrument, I became acquainted with a global philosophy. In order to respect the GuQin—both its history and practice—I needed to understand the philosophy behind the instrument and its music.

My experiences in China taught me that incorporating a global perspective into my music philosophy would help me to grow as a teacher, student, and a responsible, socially-minded individual. Prior to my time in China, my experience with music education philosophy had consisted of reading, writing, and contemplating what I would do. My encounter with the GuQin prompted me to consider how my philosophical views were influencing my life and, more importantly, my teaching. I needed to re-examine

what I had already learned about philosophy—both in music education and life. I also realized that my music education philosophy was based on a Western viewpoint.

Studying the GuQin opened me to consider a more global, holistic approach to my music education philosophy. I had no idea to what extent this new approach to philosophy would influence my teaching, learning, and musicing.

Jorgensen (2003) encourages music educators to ask: “What can philosophy bring to music education?” (p. 197). For the purposes of this chapter I would like to add, “What can Chinese philosophy bring to music education?” While attempting to unpack Jorgensen’s (2003) question, I will examine the “three important tasks that philosophers can fulfill” (pp. 197-198):

- *Clarifying* ideas – What is Chinese philosophy? How does it relate to music education?
- *Interrogating* commonplaces – “problems and potentials” (p. 202) in balance and/or contrast with examining and implementing Chinese philosophy into my own philosophy.
- *Suggesting* applications to practice (for music education).

Studying Chinese philosophy and its intimate connection to music allowed me to take another step along the road to understanding what I view as music, and how I incorporate that into music education. Yet trying to understand a philosophy that I had no idea about was very daunting. The words of Fung (1994) helped calm my doubts and anxieties. He encourages “learners [to] include the perspectives of the philosophers and practitioners of a particular music in their learning, even though they may be approaching that music as novices” (p. 51).

Clarifying Ideas: What is Chinese Philosophy?

Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;

It is the center hole that makes it useful.

Shape the clay into a vessel;

It is the space within that makes it useful.

Cut doors and windows for a room;

It is the holes that make it useful.

Therefore profit comes from what is there;

Usefulness from what is not there. (Lao-Tsu, 2012, Chp. 11)

Philosophy has always been at the heart of Chinese civilization. The development of music, arts, society, culture, philosophy, and Chinese language were not separate entities, but connected in meaning, place, and practice (Fairbank, 1987; Kraus, 1989; Lee & Shen, 1999). Music in China has been a part of the education of peasants and emperors, sages and kings, foreigners and enemies (Kraus, 1989).

Chinese philosopher, historian, and student of John Dewey, Yu-Lan Fung (1966) argues that Chinese people “are not religious because they are philosophical” (p. 4). The combination of what exists and what doesn't exist is important to consider, as we are what we know and what we don't know. Chinese philosophy focuses on “this-worldliness and other-worldliness” (p. 8). This-worldliness may be described as things in our present state, that have happened, and that will happen, whereas other-worldliness is about a realm that is not seen. When one achieves a balance between this-worldliness and other-worldliness, then one becomes a sage, like Lao-Tsu or Confucius (ibid). This

is the dividing line between the philosophies of the East and the West: the unquestioned inclusion of the spiritual, unknown dimensions.

Two texts that are inseparable to Chinese philosophy are the *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-Tsu, and *The Analects* by Confucius. Both Taoist and Confucian philosophies need to be clarified in how they are going to be used in this section. Confucianism, contrary to popular belief in the West, “is no more a religion than, say, Platonism or Aristotlianism (Fung, 1966, p.2). Taoism, on the other hand, has both a religious and philosophical school of thought. This paper will focus on the Taoist teaching of philosophy, which follows nature (accepting death), rather than trying to working against it (avoiding death) with Taoist religious practice (ibid). The *Tao Te Ching* focuses on being in harmony with what is natural. *The Analects* focus on creating harmony in society by virtue (Chenyang, 2008). Both Lao-Tsu and Confucius lived at the same time, albeit in different areas of China. It is said that Confucius once traveled to meet Lao-Tsu. Confucius was so mesmerized by Lao-Tsu, that Confucius described Lao-Tsu as a “living-dragon” (Needleman, 1989). To be called a dragon is a compliment of the highest degree. The dragon is regarded as one of the most revered and mystic of Chinese mythical creatures (ibid). The teachings of these two sages have influenced Chinese society, as well as other civilizations around them (such as Korea and Japan), for thousands of years. Even today, the education of Confucius and the spirituality of Lao-Tsu are held in high regard amongst scholars and commoners alike. But what do their ideas hold for a music educator? In the following two sections, I will briefly outline some key beliefs and values from the works of Lao-Tsu and Confucius as a springboard for discussion and investigation examined later in this chapter.

Lao-Tsu

Lao-Tsu wrote the *Tao Te Ching* as a way to encourage people to concentrate on nature. There is no beginning or end to nature. Nature is also called The Tao, or The Way. The Way is eternal (other-worldliness), whereas everything else (this-worldliness) is finite. The Way can represent many different concepts, both Eastern and Western alike: Buddha called it freedom from desire and pain; Christ, as love for God and neighbour; Mohammed, as submitting to Allah; Aristotle, as virtue; Plato, as form; indeed, the list is endless. Jacob Needleman (1989) elaborates:

No linguistic or philosophic analysis of this word can ever capture its essential meaning, because what is being referred to is an experience that can be understood only at the moment it is “tasted” with the whole of our being – simultaneously sensed, felt, and thought; and because this way of experiencing is entirely different from the way almost all of us act and think and feel in our usual lives. (Introduction, para. 4)

‘The Way’ has no distinction between cultures, races, or languages. Yet what would ‘The Way’ mean for music education? What does it mean for my musicing or for my own practice? The more I read the *Tao Te Ching*, the more I become inspired both in and out of the classroom. For example, observing both sound and no-sound in Taoism has allowed me to reflect on my music praxis and teaching. I enjoyed pondering different passages of the *Tao Te Ching*:

Those who wish to change the World

According with their desire

Cannot succeed.

The World is shaped by Tao;
It cannot be shaped by Self.
If one tries to shape it, one damages it;
If one tries to possess it, one loses it.
Therefore: Sometimes things flourish,
And sometimes they do not.
Sometimes life is hard
And sometimes it is easy.
Sometimes people are strong
And sometimes they are weak.
Sometimes you get where you are going
And sometimes you fall by the way.
The sage is not extreme, extravagant, or complacent.

(Lao-Tsu, 1995, Ch. 29)

Tao abides in non-action,
Yet nothing is left undone.
If those in power observed this,
The ten thousand things would develop naturally.
If they still desired to act,
They would return to the simplicity of formless substance.

(Lao-tsu, 2012, Ch. 37)

As I pondered their meaning, I attempted to determine what relationship they might have to teaching, learning, and listening.

Confucius

Confucius, however, saw The Way as a type of moral and social education. He taught students of any social class or background. He played the GuQin, and had a deep love for the Xiao: a long, vertically played bamboo flute (Yue, 2008). Confucius used music as a way to educate society, and to create mindful, respectful, and peaceful people. Confucius believed that one needs to focus on improving the self before one focuses on society. Yu elaborates that, “Confucius puts weight on the harmony among human beings and the harmony between human beings and the world” (p.611). When harmony is achieved, the self is finally unified with society. Self-focus can be compared to a teacher seeking personal development for his teaching as well as his relationship to society, both locally and globally. Conscious reflection may assist the teacher to apply what he learns about himself, both in and out of the classroom.

Confucius sees virtue as the top priority for learning and living, both for the individual and the society (Chenyang, 2008). If individuals strive for virtue then “there will be no practice of wickedness” (Confucius, 2012, Ch. 4). Confucius’ view of society, and how music creates harmony within society, is one that music educators would do well to adopt. Some questions that arose as I pondered the connection of Confucian tenets to music education are: How can a teacher be mindful of where his practice may be leading students? How might teachers practice social mindfulness with their music? What are the most important virtues of music education, considering both this-worldliness and other-worldliness?

Lao-Tsu and Confucius for Music Education

For both philosophers, music was seen as a way to be in harmony with people and nature. Taoism states that music is already present in nature. ‘No-sound’ is just as much of an ideal as ‘sound’ when playing the GuQin. Confucius believed that music is an integral part of educating humankind. The maxim “never too much” is the golden mean towards which both philosophies strive (Fung, 1966). Chinese music philosophy concerns aesthetics, intuition, and individual responses to this-worldliness and other-worldliness. For example, musical harmonies may have been used like using different flavours in cooking, and could either leave a bad taste in someone’s mouth or satisfy someone’s musical hunger (Chenyang, 2008). Therefore, good harmonies could help balance a good person’s heart and mind, and bad harmonies would cause unrest and frustration. But what is good harmony according to Chinese music philosophy?

Chenyang (2008) elaborates: “The ancient Chinese concept of harmony is best understood as a comprehensive process of harmonization. It encompasses spatial as well as temporal dimensions, metaphysical as well as moral and aesthetic dimensions” (p. 96). The notion of pitch and harmonies in traditional Chinese music involves blending notes together to express joy, sadness, sorrow, happiness, discomfort, and maybe even social unrest. Much like Western music, tension and release are used to balance moods. Opposites were encouraged in creating music: What goes down must come up; what goes in must go out. The possibilities of music containing harmonies that respond to one another—not dissimilar from the tension and release taught in Western practice—are endless. Unfortunately, culture can limit creation through the “spatial, temporal, metaphysical, moral, and aesthetic dimensions” of which Chenyang (ibid) spoke. To

summarize the main points of two philosophers: Taoism works inside the laws of nature, allowing events to take their natural course whereas Confucianism educates towards the greater good of ethics to create a better society.

Interrogating Commonplaces and Challenges

A (Zen Buddhism) story describes how a certain teacher used to stick out his thumb when he was asked to explain the Buddhist *Tao*. On such occasions, he would simply remain silent, but would display his thumb. Noticing this, his boy attendant began to imitate him. One day the teacher saw him in this act, and quick as lightning chopped off the boy's thumb. The boy ran away crying. The teacher called him to come back, and just as the boy turned his head, the teacher again stuck out his own thumb, whereupon the boy received Sudden Enlightenment. (Fung, 1966, p. 342)

To work on learning is to increase day by day;

To work on the *Tao* is to decrease day by day. (Lao-Tsu, 2012, Ch. 48)

I had learned all the notes to "Tina Shan" and I thought I played wonderfully.

Azura agreed that I played well (Yin), but the feeling (Yueh) of the piece was missing:

Azura: Paul, remember that "Tian Shan" is about nature—"The Way"—and their harmony together as one. What do you think of nature?

Me: Calm, green, inspiring. It's where I go for peace and quiet. I find myself in nature.

Azura: What do you think of 'The Way'?

Me: All knowing, ever present, all loving.

Azura: Yet when you just played "Tian Shan," you played it quickly.

Me: I suppose so, but I don't know how fast or slow I should play it.

Azura: When playing "Tian Shan" keep in mind the balance of two concepts. Nature is something that we can see; 'The Way' is something that we cannot see, but it is something that we can feel. If you keep this in mind, you will not play the piece quickly, or loudly, or forcefully. You will play it as you would walk through a forest, knowing that 'The Way' also walks with you. (journal entry, May 31, 2011)

After examining a fragment of Chinese philosophy, I found myself riddled with hesitations, questions, and problems. The above story wherein the teacher uses brutality to teach enlightenment may be shocking for most Western readers. It was for me. But the Eastern philosopher would see this story as a metaphor for understanding the world that is both seen and unseen. I, like the student, was caught between worlds that I could both feel and see, wanting to achieve some sort of enlightenment. However, my philosophical roots needed to be explored. For example, I identified more with pragmatism. I tended to lean towards the praxial side of music education—the doing of music rather than the aesthetics of music (Elliott, 1995). I questioned how an aesthetic approach would work in the classroom. I believed that an aesthetic approach would leave students confused, without any practical skill. After learning about the *Yueh* of making music, I needed to take a step back and question my beliefs. Becoming acquainted with

Chinese philosophy caused me to reflect on my Western philosophical approach to music.

Some Similarities, Many Differences

Chinese philosophy has, like Plato or Aristotle in Western philosophy, virtue and morality as guidelines for how to live (Cooper, 2009; Yue, 2008). Chinese philosophy is new to me, though, and I struggled to incorporate it into my daily practice of teaching and learning music. Western philosophy had been like a home for me, and I wondered how the two schools of philosophical thought could be integrated? I found Shen's (2003) concept of "intercultural philosophy" intriguing and worth investigating. Shen suggests that "to study intercultural philosophy means not to enclose one's own vision of philosophy within the limit of one's tradition, especially that of Western philosophy" (p. 357). First one must examine some contrasts between the two schools of thought. Drawing from multiple sources (Chenyang, 2008; Cooper, 2009; Y. Fung, 1966; C.V. Fung, 1994; Kirkland, 2003; Liu, 2009; Shen, 2003; Yu, 2008; Yue, 2008), I constructed a chart which outlines some major differences between Western and Chinese philosophy:

Western Philosophy	Chinese Philosophy
<u>Knowledge</u>	<u>Intuition</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rational, scientific, qualitative, limited - duality of one and many - talking about metaphysics¹⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social, aesthetic, qualitative, unlimited - indivisible one and many - not talking about metaphysics

¹⁴ Metaphysics could be described as being, knowing, identity, time, or space.

- clear, complex knowing	- suggestive, simplistic knowing
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Figure 1. Some major differences between Western and Chinese philosophy

Considering my cultural and philosophical background, I discovered that my roots lay in the Greek line of philosophy and practice. As one can see in the chart, the West is more concerned with adding knowledge and is based on rational activity. By contrast, Chinese philosophy focuses on intuition and pragmatic activity. Shen (2003) points out that “Chinese culture cherishes the life-world, which is partly constructed by human beings, partly unfolding itself spontaneously in the rhythm of nature” (p. 365). The constant need to build on knowledge in order to know is not as much of a concern in Chinese philosophy.

Another interesting area of difference between Chinese and Western philosophy concerns the concept of “means and ends.” In *Dewey and Taoism: Teleology and Art*, Sartwell (2009) makes a distinction that a “means-ends rationality is at its very heart paradoxical, (it) is a problematic situation from which we seek release” (p. 34). The Western music curricula that I have experienced tend to be concerned with where the students are going, what skills they will gain, what type of music they will recognize, and what piece they will compose. Chinese music philosophy concentrates on the process of learning, the in-between. Learning the GuQin is based on how the learning is going. It is not the note mastery of pieces that matters, but, rather, the experience of learning the piece.

Some Suggestions for Music Educators

A philosophy should be moving, growing, adapting, and changing (Bowman, 1992). If a philosophy is focused on only one proponent or tradition, or even one philosophical culture, it can become myopic and stale. My experiences in China and the writing of this narrative are what have propelled me to renew, revitalize, and reshape my philosophy. “Philosophy is not just something to be *known*, but is also something to be *experienced*” (emphasis in original, Y. Fung, 1966, p. 10). What I had formerly understood as music—time, rhythm, pitch, and structure—was transformed. I realized that the real essence of music was not something on the outside for me to take, but it was something for me to find within. In line with a Taoist philosophy, music, like nature, had successfully shaped me, rather than me shaping it. In line with a Confucian philosophy, I felt that music education could help me understand how I could become a morally correct member of society. Time, rhythm, pitch, and structure still mattered, but now they were viewed from an intercultural exchange of both the Western path of knowledge and the Eastern path of intuition.

The question I now pose to myself and to others is this: How can an individual’s music philosophy shape the culture in which one lives? I agree with Gould (2004) when she posits that philosophy “is not about seeking truth ... but about working out problems that exist in lived reality – nomadically, outside of traditional philosophy” (p. 294). Philosophy, like a narrative, is forged through experience and being “in-the-midst.” I like to think of philosophy

as a type of nomadic wandering in which philosophers embark on a conceptual trip without a map. . . The destination of this trip is unknown, and arriving at it

involves crossing borders, and abandoning traditional discourses in a type of deterritorialization of selves, identities, and ways of thinking that releases us from such borders and becomes light . . . like a tent put down by nomads. (Ibid, p. 293)

Traveling is about letting go, and since my travels included studying Chinese history and philosophy, I had to be prepared for the borders of my previously held philosophy to expand and change. I realize now that my travels with Chinese philosophy and my music education practice have just begun. C. V. Fung (1994) cautions the music educator when he writes: “Viewing musics of other cultures from one’s own particular cultural viewpoint defeats the purpose of studying other musics” (p. 51). Stemming from my own experiences, I now have some suggestions for music educators who wish to have a philosophy that “is open to other types of rationality, or better say, to more comprehensive function of human reason” (Shen, 2003, p. 357).

First, striving for an intercultural philosophy is important in this day and age. The world has become a Global village. From music to iPhones, people are connecting in ways that would have seemed impossible just twenty years ago. Investigating philosophies of other traditions is a way of creating an intercultural dialogue. Shen explains:

Different ways of doing philosophy in different cultural traditions could enrich our vision of the multi-layered and multi-faceted reality. Especially in this time of radical change, any philosophy capable of tackling this challenge has to include in itself an intercultural dimension. (p. 358)

The drive for philosophy should be “intellectually fearless” (Palmer, 2009). One should aim to “pick the pockets” of many philosophies, many backgrounds, and many

places. Despite the fact that knowledge and experience of Eastern thought is still quite new in the West, and even newer in music education, Shen (2003) encourages teacher philosophers to use the following questions to put more emphasis on their approach to intercultural philosophy:

How could each philosophical tradition draw the best of its cultural resources for the benefit of other philosophical traditions in the world? [And] how could each philosophical tradition achieve self-understanding by facing impartially other philosophical traditions and, furthermore, let philosophizing become indispensable for the mutual understanding of all cultural traditions in the world?
(p. 357)

Second, the art of personal reflection needs to be encouraged. The individual is united with society both as a product and creator. Without personal reflection, music teaching and practice will continue to be a mixture of rules, performances, guidelines, expectations, administrations, and regulations. Music teachers are encouraged to become sages within the practice of music education. In other words, teachers will have to delve deep within themselves to understand what their virtues are. This does not mean that one needs to go to a temple, or read the *Analects* or *The Republic* but rather that one needs to take the time to become aware of and understand personal moral values. The examined self is a goal of both Western and Eastern philosophical viewpoints. To focus on the humanness of life is what is best (Yu, 2008).

Chinese Philosophy as a Likely Bridge Between Praxialism and Aesthetics

In both Chinese and Western civilizations, music is an integral component of the education. Both streams of thought and practice provide the opportunity and

reasons for music educators to reflect on and rethink their philosophies, missions, and objectives of music teaching. (C.V. Fung, 1994, p. 51)

Linear thinking in Western philosophy—both praxial and aesthetic philosophies—may tie a music educator into only one line of thought, just as following a guide book's itineraries may leave the traveler without many authentic experiences. Contemporary Western music education philosophers, such as David Elliott and Bennett Reimer, seem preoccupied with arguing the merits and faults of aesthetic and praxial viewpoints. But from my brief study of Chinese thought I have learned that Chinese philosophy in music encourages both pragmatism and aestheticism within teaching, performing, and learning music. One of the most interesting things about Chinese traditional music is that the performer, composer, and listener are completely symbiotic with one another:

A composer would rarely write a piece for someone other than himself or herself. Thus, composer and performer were generally united in a single individual. In addition, this composer-performer most frequently was the listener also. In cases where there was an audience, it was an intimate audience that was composed of mutually interested companions who could musically contribute to the experience to some extent. Therefore, the composer-performer-listener chain became a unity. (C. V. Fung, 1994, p. 50)

How incredible it would be to encourage students to simultaneously compose, perform, and listen. Imagine students enabled to approach writing music as a life-building activity! Students could take their composition and share it with a couple of people they trusted most—peers, teachers, mentors—and then return to the composition

with a desire to improve their music. But this shouldn't be reserved solely for composers of new, original music. Creating music is a crucial component of a holistic approach to learning music. As Smithrim and Upitis (2004) declare, "scholars and practitioners claim that composition is a specific musical ability everyone possesses, and that the challenge for schooling is to make composition a central feature of music education rather than an add-on" (p. 78). Composition need not dominate music teaching and learning, but it needs to be more evident and integrated. Musicians also should be able to take musics of the past and present and create new interpretations as they are learning to perform them. For example, Glenn Gould approached all musics that he performed by interpreting them with fresh eyes and ears, even disregarding compositional markings at times (Payzant, 1978).¹⁵ After contemplating my desire to focus on praxial-based music education rather than take the aesthetic approach, I realize that a balance of the two—like the *Yin* and *Yueh* being together—can help music education create more dialogue between educators, institutions, and students. The unity of both praxialism and aestheticism in music is worth considering as we enter an age where "the student becomes a better person through the play and effort of becoming a musician" (Jorgenson, 2003, p. 205).

Concluding Thoughts on a Balanced, Intercultural Philosophy

Teachers are encouraged to develop a philosophy that includes doing, feeling, and creating music. Beliefs, experiences, and clarity, which are dynamic, open, and respectful, are key to a balanced philosophy (Bowman, 1992). "The quality of a

¹⁵ See Payzant's (1978) book, *Glenn Gould: Music & Mind*, for more information on how Glenn Gould approached performing both his own works and those of other composers.

philosophy depends on its logical consistency in relation to the natures and values of music and education, and to the professional practice of music education” (Elliott, 1995, p. 11). In response to Elliott’s quote, I feel that the nature and value of music and education are ever changing. Therefore, the consistency that Elliott (and Chinese philosophy) speaks of is that of inconsistency. Philosophy should not be a constant, or what Gould (2004) would call “linear.” Reimer (2003) adds a valid point by stating that

an experience-based philosophy of music education is inclusive of all musics and of all ways of being engaged with it because every particular kind and type of music, and every particular way music is made and received, represents a particular opportunity for musical experience. All such opportunities are precious. (p. 69)

One’s approach to philosophy must be open to observing life, living, and learning from all angles. If teachers neglect the imagination, mind, and intuition for the sake of practicality or loyalty, then they will refuse to grow and change. “The Master said: Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous” (Confucius, 2002, Book 2, Ch. 15).

In Chinese philosophy, the feeling of music (*Yueh*) is more important than the rationality of musical notes and performance (*Yin*) (ibid). Exploring Chinese philosophy has helped me to broaden my philosophy of music education. It is important to bridge the philosophical gap between the Western approach of gaining knowledge (positive thought) and the Chinese approach of accepting and affirming nature (negative thought). Y. Fung (1966) clarifies the story of the Zen Master and his boy attendant recounted above:

Whether this story is true or not, it suggests the truth that before the negative method is used, the philosopher or student of philosophy must pass through the positive method, and before the simplicity of philosophy is reached, he must pass through its complexity. One must speak very much before one keeps silent.

(p.342)

I would like to think of the story of the Zen master and his attendant as a balance of practice between Chinese Philosophy and Western Philosophy. Indeed, one does not have to achieve sudden enlightenment so violently as the metaphor suggests, but, just as the student realized this-worldliness and other-worldliness simultaneously, acknowledging both praxialism and aestheticism within the same music education philosophy is just as essential. Furthermore, the metaphor may extend to accepting that even the most sound of philosophies could be missing something. Through intercultural dialogue and personal reflection, and challenging one's biases, music education philosophy may become something more than words on a page. If Chinese philosophy were to permeate a small fraction of music education philosophy, then administrators, teachers, school boards, districts, parents, and students might begin to focus on the process of musicing rather than the ends that music will achieve. Doing this may identify musicing as an infinite part of nature that will equally benefit both society and the individual.

Chapter Five: Unpacking and Sharing—Some Implications for Music Education

Some Thoughts on Traveling: What Should I Take Home?

Being a traveler is not easy if one expects to follow a certain pattern. For example, travels to Hawaii will automatically be imagined with pictures of beaches, sunny days, surfing, tropical fruit, luaus, and snorkelling. However, if something went wrong with this ideal picture, such as stormy weather or no sea life, then one's travels might be remembered by woeful stories of how the weather in Hawaii is terrible and all the sea-life is gone.

In my experience, Chinese tourism usually concentrates on the main attractions: shopping in Hong Kong; hiking on The Great Wall; tea-drinking in Shanghai, China's biggest metropolis; getting lost in the Forbidden Temple in Beijing; and the renowned hospitality of rural Tibetans who live 5000 meters above sea-level. China is still an enigma to the Western world, only having opened up its doors to commercial traveling since the late 1990s. Now China has exploded into the limelight, both for economics and tourism, but nobody really knows what that means, or what it will mean for the future of travel. But, somehow still, Western tourists believe a completely unique Chinese experience awaits.

Because China seems so new to traveling, many travelers that I have met feel as if they are incarnations of Marco Polo. Ambitious travelers believe as though they are about to explore the new frontier of world travel. They hope to see

things they've only dreamed about. But a stark reality hits most tourists. When the plane touches the ground in Shanghai something is different. Before the tourists know it, the unique Chinese adventure will appear to be rather ordinary. Many tourists will be staying at the same hostels; going to the same architectural, historical, cultural, and natural wonders; tasting the same cuisines in the same restaurants; hiking the same paths; browsing the same museums, gift stores, and markets. Using the guidebook as their all-knowing guide, most move around like sheep. I hoped that I would not fall into this tourist trap, and that I could be open to whatever encounter that may arise, good or bad. (journal entry, September 3, 2010)

When I started my travels I sought to learn a Global instrument. Learning a Global instrument is something that I knew nothing about. I thought that my end result would be some sort of handy guidebook with details on how to play, what to do, and why it is important. Some of these details appeared in my journal and subsequently in this narrative, but my initial thoughts, hopes, and dreams were more akin to those of a badly informed tourist. I truly thought that I already knew what I was going to experience. But I was wrong. I really had no clue where learning the GuQin would lead me.

To answer Reynold's (2012) question, "When do you feel most like a music teacher?" (p. 276) I would respond, "When *don't* I feel like a music teacher?" Responding with a question may seem very Taoist, but I always feel that I am learning, experiencing, and "in-the-midst" of musicing. This chapter explores the implications of my narrative travels. I hope that the implications will enrich, question, and encourage the practice of and experience for music educators as much as they have done for me.

Culturally and socially speaking, musicians need to jump into the brisk water of real experience and try to enjoy it. I had to suspend my beliefs when things weren't going my way. Jorgenson (2009) encourages objectivity as a key to understanding what is happening to both research and researcher. In this way, knowledge "continues to be tested and verified, where multiple perspectives are combined to establish shared understandings that continue to be subject to revision but are useful for the present and taken as more-or-less trustworthy" (p. 76). My narrative may not connect with every teacher or musician who reads it, but I know that my experiences have led to a way of knowing and a way of explaining this knowledge. Barrett and Stauffer (2009b) maintain that a "narrative is not a panacea, but rather one way to make audible the voices, experiences, and meanings of individuals and communities engaged in music and to raise those questions that are often left unasked" (p. 19). In order to get to where I am with my musicing and my narrative, I needed to travel forward to my destination and then backward again to my home. Indeed, I needed to look outward for understanding and inward for reflection.

Why Creative Writing is Important

My travels allowed me to examine my life more thoroughly: musically, socially, spiritually, and professionally. As stated at the outset I willingly exposed my faults, shortcomings, and misunderstandings, prejudices, strengths, and weaknesses, but I wrote with a purpose. My purpose was to link one narrative – my narrative – to teachers, students, and curricula: to the past, the present, and the potential future. It is a brave thing to sit down and write honestly about one's life. Richardson's (2001) statement that

“people who write are always writing about their lives” (p. 34) was very true for me, and I wished to recount one brief chapter of my life as well as I could.

Zerubavel (1999) explains, “it is almost impossible to live in the modern world and not have to write” (p. 1). The skill of writing well is not a question of whether or not someone can write. It seems to me that many Master’s students have some previous experience with writing, but writing well is a craft, a skill, and it takes time and effort to achieve good results. As Zinsser (2006) says, “Good writing doesn’t come naturally, though most people seem to think it does” (p. 9). Writing has to be done. It has to be constant. It has to involve commitment. One of the best things to do when traveling, I have found, is to write a journal. Some of the most amazing travelers I have met have been the ones who wrote about their experiences. Indeed, years and years may go by before I pick up my journal again, and when I do eventually, I may even think: “Did I really write this? It seems like another person wrote it. These events are so vague, yet, when I read them, so clear.” Even though there might be some doubt of the narrative’s authorship in the future, I will know the work is mine, and I will be reminded of all that I have learned as a result of writing. It doesn’t matter if it is a blog, a journal, or an email. “To get started writing, you must get your butt in the chair!” (DeMethra & Nash, 2011, p. 39). If one is constantly writing, there is no doubt that the writing will improve.

I had always recorded my travels in journals and blogs, but this time was different. My audience for my narrative had changed: it was an audience that consisted of professors, graduate student cohort members, family, and friends. My blog writing started well, I thought, but I needed to be more academic in my approach.¹⁶

¹⁶ See <http://amusedtourist.blogspot.com>

Unfortunately, because of pressures that I put on myself to sound academic, my writing became less frequent. As a result, I lost some of my non-academic audience in my quest to prove my academic skills. I lost my creativity. In short, for a time, I lost my unique voice.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) elaborate that “people live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones” (p. xxvi). But where does the creating happen? Can I write a narrative in a creative way? I have neither read nor seen anything that suggests music education research should be academically boring. I have had many years’ writing experience in education, from crafting overnight essays to writing short stories. However, most of these writing episodes were fuelled by extrinsic motivation. In my twelve years of taking university courses I have never been asked to write creatively nor have I ever taken a creative writing class. Interestingly, one of the definitions of *write* in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (n.d.) is “to compose” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/write>). As I reflect on my own teaching, it seems that I also have rarely exposed my music students to creative writing or composing. Sadly, much of the responsibility for this deficit lies with me and I regret it now.

Below, I would like to share some of DeMethra’s and Nash’s (2011) guidelines for how to write *Scholarly Personal Narratives (SPN)*. They have helped me a great deal:

1. Make your voice distinct, candid, and uniquely your own.
2. Tell some good personal stories . . .
3. *Me*-search writing is the indispensable source to *re*-search writing; and . . . it can even lead to *we*-search as others read and respond to it . . .

4. Keep telling yourself that you have a personal story worth telling and a point about your subject matter worth sharing.
5. Remind yourself . . . that scholarly writing can be fun, engaging, and pleasing to write . . . not only for the writer but also for the readers.
6. Strive for academic *rigor* in your personal narrative writing that is closer to academic *vigor* than it is to academic rigor *mortis*. (emphases in original, pp. 27-28)

When writing a narrative, one should be able to use skills acquired throughout the years. However, reading so many articles, academic texts, and research papers on issues surrounding music education led me to feel that academic writing is largely dull and uncreative. Maybe learning creative writing skills could help connect the academic world to the real world. Maybe people—not just teachers and university students—would actually *want* to read the articles during their spare time if they contained a spark of creativity. Cziksenthmihalyi, Geertz, Dewey, Friere, and many other academic authors have been very successful. Their books reached a wider audience somehow. But how? Demethra and Nash (2011) explain that a successful narrative

is measured by its author's courage, honesty, skill as a creative writer and storyteller, and ability to bring into the writing research and scholarship that is directly related to the themes and stories in the manuscript. . . The key is relevance not abundance. (p. 143)

The relevance that narrative writers need to remember is to connect with the potential audience, in this case, teachers who may read the text. It is not good enough to say that this is only my story, and not another's story. I believe that my narrative can

connect with people around me. I also think that that is why learning how to write well is important for creating relevance for the music education world. If this text doesn't get to at least one classroom—my own—then what is the point?

Relevance also makes me wonder about this project that I have devoted much time to: Will people care? Have I written in a way that will connect with the reader? Maybe introducing more creative writing in music teacher education could help narrative inquiry become more than a “musical ornament, an elaboration on the established themes of psychometric inquiry, those of measurement and certainty” (Clandinin, 2009, p. 207). When experiencing doubts about my writing, I have to remind myself that what I have experienced up to this point is valid and important. Furthermore, the transaction that I have had with the academic world is an important one. It has taught me how to have flow from one theme to another, how to logically place my arguments, questions, and research, and how to extract the information that I think will help strengthen my arguments, questions, and research.

Regarding Narrative in Music Education

Breaking down barriers is at the heart of narrative writing and living. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) *three-dimensional space* helped me bring focus to my story. However, I never felt as if the three dimensions were enough. Upon reflection, music should be a dimension worth considering. If it were included, the four dimensions would be:

1. Personal (subjectively inward and outward)
2. Social (culturally inward and outward)
3. Temporal (backward and forward in time)

4. Musical (music in all 3 dimensions mentioned above).

Bowman (2009) is adamant that “research should be among the basic dispositions and fluencies music educators carry into the field and continue to refine through their praxis” (p. 10). A narrative could be a way for music educators to carry research *into* their practice, *for* their practice, *through* their practice. After reading Veblen’s (2005) *Community Music and Praxialism: Narratives and Reflections*, I realized that the characteristics of community music were identical to those I had experienced whilst learning the GuQin. According to Veblen, the relationship between community and student is a type of synergy, where both groups encounter one another’s experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints. Veblen (2005) outlines some characteristics that are important for approaching the ‘musical’ dimension in narrative inquiry:

1. [Emphasize a] variety and diversity of musics that reflect and enrich the cultural life of the community and of the participants,
2. [Actively participate] in music making of all kinds. . .
3. [Have] multiple learner/ teacher relationships and processes. . .
4. [Encourage] commitment to lifelong musical learning and access for all members of the community. . .
5. [Recognize] that participants’ social and personal growth are as important as their musical growth. . .
6. [Believe] in the value and use of music to foster inter-cultural acceptance and understanding. . .
7. Respect . . . cultural property of a given community and [acknowledge] both individual and group ownership of musics. . .

8. [Foster] . . . personal delight and confidence in individual creativity. . . .
9. [Be flexible in] teaching, learning and facilitation modes (oral, notational, holistic, experiential, analytic). (pp. 311-312)

Keeping these characteristics in mind may help the music educator connect to the fourth dimension of musicing within the narrative. Musicing is just as important as living within the other dimensions, and investigating the musical dimension will help connect one dimension to the other; inward and outward, backward and forward. McCarthy (2007) explains:

Music educators are asked to re-conceptualize the way they hear and see music, that is, to attend to new aspects of a musical event; to listen for new levels of meaning from the sounds in context; to look with new eyes at the interaction of participants, place, and sound; to acknowledge the human values that are transmitted in the act of music making; and to acknowledge the role of cultural and social contexts as an integral part of embedded musical meaning. (p. 29)

All of the stories in music education can be helpful to those who are beginning their first year of teaching, those who are attempting to learn a new instrument, or even those who are struggling to know if they are on the right path. More stories are needed to help understand the rich perspectives of musicians, teachers, students, parents, universities, administrators, and curriculum builders (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009a, 2012b; Bowman, 2006; Conway, 2003; Jorgensen, 2009). I am certain narrative writing will help my musicing in the present and the future, as I continually learn from the past. I feel that

to contemplate what was learned, taught, and experienced, is to grow in personal, professional, spiritual, and social ways.

Regarding Cross-cultural Collaboration

In my view, the traveler should aim to view a culture from the inside. Unfortunately, most tourism energy is directed at showing glimpses of a culture and receiving fistfuls of cash. To be honest, there are other options that exist away from the tourist traps, but these options are difficult to find. Like a tourist who is trying to experience more than popular tourism, I struggle to find the insider view in Global music curricula. A Canadian studying traditional Chinese music may briefly take on the role of a musical tourist, but there are ways of creating a safe cross-cultural exchange between the two music cultures.

Dunbar-Hall (2001) has spent many years involved with what he calls “cultural tourism.” There are many interpretations for cultural tourism with respect to music education in diverse, cultural practices. Music, within the context of cultural tourism, takes on the interdisciplinary role of ethnomusicology. Dunbar-Hall explains:

Whether Merriam’s definition of ethnomusicology as ‘music in culture’ or Nettl’s as ‘music as a part of culture’ is adopted here is not as important as the realisation that music is a significant cultural tourism product, and that the study of music in relation to culture has something to add to consideration of its role in that context.
(p. 173-174)

While observing music in a specific cultural context one can be involved in two different areas when learning. Firstly, there is the continuation of a cultural tradition where “the roles of the tourist are set by culture-bearers” (ibid, p. 175). Secondly,

exchanging how one does music—from the point of view of both the culture bearer and the person doing to musicing—will help create an intercultural dialogue between cultures and musics. Dunbar-Hall's (2006) further observations of four Australian students learning Balinese gamelan music confirmed

that learning in a cross-cultural setting produced problems these players would not have encountered in the music already familiar to them. Their learning was self-directed, relying on the invention of strategies to compensate for lack of exposure to the music. These players made conscious decisions about how to learn and acted purposefully. (p. 69)

This suggests that my cultural roots, and how I have learned music in the past influenced my travels with the GuQin. The role of culture plays a large part in learning, and the individual who is learning will, in the end, make the best decision that suits his learning style. I agree with Dunbar-Hall (ibid) that

perhaps due to the anecdotal fallacy that “music is a universal language,” music educators assume that all students learn in the same, universal ways, failing to acknowledge culture as a vector of music education. This does not recognise that learners assume responsibility for solving problems and construct individual learning pathways in response to the problems they confront. It also ignores the needs of individual students as they attempt to adapt previous learning styles to what are for them new teaching methods and musical expectations. (p. 69-70)

A cross-cultural situation is not new to education, yet there is a misconception as to its definition and application to music education. The importance of entering a cross-cultural situation is to identify “differences in concepts about the creative process,

performance and artistic and authentic sensibilities” (Wasiak, 2009, p. 218). Resources and research are improving, but the practice of Global musics is, in many cases, stuck in colonial times. The real thing is not reading a book on diverse cultures or attending a conference dedicated to learning about diverse practices of musics. How does a music teacher help find the real thing for himself and his students? There has to be another way for music education, but what is it? Where does one go? Both Riley (2012) and Dunbar-Hall (2001, 2006, 2009b) experienced cross-cultural study, and found that their narrative continued to expand even years after the experience. Perhaps this is what C.V. Fung (1995) meant when he stated that learning global musics “can broaden one's view of humanities at the global level” (p. 39).

Regarding Interculturalism

The term interculturalism seems more in alignment with what is needed in music curricula today. I feel that sectioning music curriculum into Western music and Global music continues a divide between “these” musics and “those” musics. Interculturalism encourages dialogue rather than multicultural representation. Using their success in Europe as a model, Meer and Modood (2011) have outlined four aspects of interculturalism:

First, as something greater than coexistence, in that interculturalism is allegedly more geared toward interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism. Second, that interculturalism is conceived as something less ‘groupist’ or more yielding of synthesis than multiculturalism. Third, that interculturalism is something more committed to a stronger sense of the whole, in terms of such things as societal cohesion and national citizenship. Finally, that where multiculturalism may be

illiberal and relativistic, interculturalism is more likely to lead to criticism of illiberal cultural practices (as part of the process of intercultural dialogue). (p. 177)

Perhaps these intercultural changes of dialogue, cultural practices, synthesis, and citizenship that were observed in politics could be explored in music education as well. Intercultural dialogue in music education can help discourage musical intolerance (Senyshyn, 2004), where one music is studied instead of another; racism (Bradley, 2007), where one music is deemed better than another because of culture and location; and instead foster “transcending boundaries” (Wade, 2004), where the intercultural dialogue could include both traditional cultures and changing cultures. My intercultural experience with the GuQin has helped me become more of a “culture bearer” for my students. I do not deny my musical tourism, nor do I profess to be a professional, but through a cross-cultural music education experience I have been able to understand two cultures in one. I feel confident that I can transfer (with the help of my teacher and other musicians) my knowledge from teacher to student. The chance to apply intercultural dialogue in my teaching practice seems much more appropriate and real. With inter-dialogue, one can really start to change the direction of respecting all musics, from all times, and from all cultures.

Some Suggestions on Collaborating Cross-culturally

I would like to draw upon some other resources that are helpful for understanding what it means to have a cross-cultural collaboration. Culture bearers, authenticity, and interculturalism are all respected when participating in cross-cultural collaboration. The musician’s role needs to be that of crossing boundaries, questioning issues, and trying

something new. But how can this cross-culture collaboration be brought into the classroom for our students? How can they get an authentic experience? Some texts offer a decent window into Global musics. I found *Thinking Musically* (Wade, 2004) and *Teaching Music Globally* (Campbell, 2004) very helpful in how to think, do, and listen to Global musics. However, reading the texts and trying to implement them in the classroom were much more difficult than I anticipated. Because I had never before encountered the music I was teaching, the texts only went as far as the words on the page, the examples on the Compact Discs, and my interpretation of the two.

Burton (2002) mentions that the trustworthiness and the reliability of musical materials need to be established first. Dunbar-Hall (2009b) suggests that “ethnopedagogy” will be able to access both the learning of diverse musics as well as teaching. Ethnopedagogy “requires that performance . . . becomes a site for thinking about learning and teaching, and a culturally influenced activity with much to teach apart from repertoire and technique” (p. 76). As teachers engage themselves in studying music while learning with a culture bearer, the knowledge of how to teach the music will become clearer. As the saying goes, “You teach as you have been taught.” When we engage in a music that is new to us, we act as students, and then transmit that knowledge back into the classroom. It is no different than when we learned the piano, violin, or voice. Yet learning something new is difficult, as Countryman (2009) elaborates: “[We] continually assert that it is normal (human) to resist knowledge that disrupts what we believe, but it is not acceptable to avoid this discomfort” (p. 34). Studying with those who know the music of a particular culture—the teaching, the culture, the history, and the philosophy—could help the learning process to be more authentic than a video,

conference, or book. Finding culture bearers, researching trustworthiness, and engaging in ethnopedagogy may be clues and keys to collaborating safely across cultures. Cross-culture collaboration could help a school be transformed by the interculturalism that is implied in the classroom.

If a teacher can show the students how she has shed cultural boundaries and learned West-African drumming techniques, for example, students will respond with trust and excitement. Here are some examples of how cross-cultural collaboration may be approached, which have been adapted from Burton's (2002) "Weaving the Tapestry of World Musics":

1. Arranging the materials with a culture bearer
2. Research the histories of a particular place and music, no matter how near or far
3. Discuss meanings, observations, and biases in order to help create a non-prejudiced classroom environment

The world is becoming a much more integrated place, and finding culture bearers in cities is not the problem it might have been twenty years ago. Nevertheless, locating a culture bearer takes time, dedication, and an open mind. With the pressures of concerts, program administration, and a hectic school year, the trek to find and learn from a culture bearer is less than ideal. Fortunately, one's own classroom can be a wonderful place to find culture bearers and to create collaboration and interculturalism. Determining where students are from can result in finding a culture bearer from among the class community. There may be a parent, a cousin, or a friend who can act as a culture bearer. Perhaps

there are concerts of global music happening in nearby towns and cities that teacher and students can attend.

Finding a culture bearer does not necessarily mean travelling long distances, although immersion in a culture is ideal. What is important is to find a person, society, or institution that can act as a cultural representative of the intended music of study. In Canada, globalization and interculturalism are becoming more and more present and important to acknowledge. Diverse cultures bring diverse musics. There is no better way to get to know an international community than to collaborate with one another.

More on Thinking About

In this section I propose some suggestions for music educators to use in their classrooms. I use Wade's (2004) concept of "Thinking about" with the specific issues that are discussed below.

Thinking about instruments

- Learn a new instrument *with* the class. This will open the eyes of both the teacher and student to how it feels to teach, learn, and explore new territory.
- Perform for your students. Show them that it is okay to make mistakes. Discuss the role of instruments and how society perceives them. Maybe some of these barriers (of performance pressure, status symbol, elitism) can be broken down.

Thinking about language

"The ability to understand the expressive quality and inner substance of music facilitates music education in the broadest sense and goes far beyond the production of musical tone" (C.V. Fung, 1994, p. 51).

- Discuss the meaning of *Yin* and *Yueh* with your class. See if they can suggest other words to describe the internal and external of musicing.
- Always learn a little of the language of the culture that you are studying. Even if it is German, French, Arabic, Swahili, Italian, or old English, both teacher and student will benefit from this taste of the culture.
- Sing songs in another language and learn them *with* the class. Making mistakes is okay and funny. Helping children enjoy themselves while learning is much better than striving for perfection.

Thinking about rhythm and time

- Encourage students to perform a piece mirroring how they are feeling, rather than what the notes say on the page. Is there a story to the piece? If not, what does the student (or teacher) think it is about? Is there a history to it? Have you looked?
- Ask students (or the teacher) to perform a piece (Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, for example), and insert pauses wherever they feel necessary. The students could take extra time for the triplets and less time for the dotted eighth notes. Discuss how the piece is changed if rhythm is removed.
- Ask students to create their own notation. This could be done graphically, but try to make sure that each notation symbol has at least 3 aspects to it. They could be pianissimo (dynamic), voice screech (pitch - high/low), and accent (articulation), for example. Having the students draw a 'map legend' (key) describing what symbol does what really helps.

Thinking about philosophy

In Chapter 4, I discussed some philosophical implications for the music educator.

Below are some (Chinese) philosophical fundamentals for the music classroom:

- Foster a ‘less is more’ attitude within the classroom – this is especially important for composition. Many students are daunted with composing while others are eager and try to compose too much, too soon. Try assigning small pieces based on one scale, one melody, one idea.
- When breathing in, play notes. When breathing out, there is space (no sound). For example, what does Satie’s “Gymnopédie No. 1” sound like when performed this way? Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*, 1st movement? Try to find other pieces that could be played like this. For instruments such as brass, woodwinds, or the voice, take extra time for the in-breath allowing it to be as long as it needs to be.
- Balance sound and no-sound. Challenge students to create silent spaces in performing, composing, and listening. For example, one could take a piece by Bach and put more emphasis on the rests than the notes, or one could compose a piece by trying to balance notes with rests. Maybe a teacher could take a minute in the day (or even in class) to observe silence. For an interesting article on sounds and society, read Barbara Graham’s (2000) “Sounds Surround Us.”
- Challenge students to compose-listen-perform. Try this with the classroom (or a friend, colleague, family member) – the smaller number in the group, the better. If the class is too big, divide the students into smaller groups. Students can take turn sharing their ideas on how to create a piece. Each student then uses one different idea (mode, poem, expression, rhythm, feeling, sound, etc.) and begins

to elaborate on it with the help of their classmates. This way, each student in the group can be involved with composing-performing-listening. Similar strategies have been examined in Green's (2008) *Music, informal learning and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*.

- Display quotes from Chinese philosophers in the classroom for reflection, reminders, and discussion.
- With each piece that is examined, listened to, performed, or composed (or all three at the same time!), introduce an aspect of feeling the piece with your students. This may include talking about feelings on how each student views the piece in his or her unique way. This may be a difficult concept for students to grasp: thinking beyond 'good' or 'bad' or 'awesome' or 'stupid'. See Marsala (2004) some good examples of 'the ugly in music'.
- Direct students to compose using the concept of opposites. When something goes up, make it come back down. If a tone cluster is played on the piano, follow it with a single note (or a rest).

Writing the Narrative: How Your Story May Help, Too

“Stories. . . may be resistant, even disruptive, to the accounts circulating through positions of academic power and authority” (Bowman, 2006, p. 9).

In most types of research objectivity is desired, and data is collected from a number of subjects. Yet, according to Nash and Demethra (2011), “personal narrative is a methodology that allows for the ‘subjective I’ of the writer to share the centrality of the research along with the ‘objective they’ of more traditional forms of scholarship” (p. 14). This frees the narrator to tell the story as he wishes, as long as there is some point of

reference for the reader. Even fictional stories may bring the subjective I' to the 'objective they,' where the reader relates in some way to the protagonist(s).

“The writing in personal narrative inquiry is therefore not arbitrary, but develops within the writing and within the dynamic of the writer's life. One might compare it to a quest that presses for acknowledgment through inquiry” (Conle, 2000, p. 193). I am still currently “in-the-midst” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50) of my narrative. The temporal dimension is always happening, even as I write. Carr (1991) views “temporality as a whole, the interconnection between past, present, and future” (p. 19). I do not think that I'll ever really come to a point where I can say, “I'm finished.” I hope you, the reader, will start to engage yourself in trying something new. Then, write about it. As long as you stay open-minded, openhearted, and open to experience, your travels won't stop with just one narrative. In fact, they are just beginning.

Knowing others is wisdom;

Knowing the self is enlightenment.

Mastering others requires force;

Mastering the self needs strength. (Lao-Tsu, 2012, Ch. 33)



Figure 2. The author playing the GuQin in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China

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