



MUSIC FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

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Introduction

The collective volume *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics* was published this year (Urbain 2008a) by I. B. Tauris, in collaboration with the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. Its fifteen chapters by thirteen different authors explore numerous aspects of the links between music and peace. The book contains the first chapter on this issue by Johan Galtung, one of the founders of peace studies, and an exclusive interview of folk legend Pete Seeger. Six of the authors are presenting papers in two sessions of the Commission on Art and Peace (CAP) of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) during its 2008 conference in Leuven, entitled "Building Sustainable Futures: Enacting Peace and Development."

During the conference, Vegar Jordanger presents a new paper, Cynthia Cohen provides new material to illustrate the theory in her book chapter, and June Boyce-Tillman has adapted and reframed the content of her two book chapters. Maria Elena Lopez Vinader, George Kent and Olivier Urbain present summaries of their book chapters with updates and new findings. Summaries of the six chapters as they appear in the book are presented in this paper, as well as an overview of the three new presentations by the authors named above. The final section presents insights concerning the potential contributions of music to sustainable futures.

Six Chapters in the Book *Music and Conflict Transformation* (2008)

The book is divided in four parts, Frameworks (about theories), Politics, Healing and Education, and Stories from the Field (documenting actual experiences). The six summaries in this section are adapted or copied from the website dedicated to the book (Urbain 2008b). In Part I, Frameworks, Cynthia Cohen asks what conditions are necessary for music to be a universal language, and June Boyce-Tillman presents different lenses and a deconstruction of value systems that can be used to analyze the power of music. In Part II, Politics, George Kent warns the reader about the unpeaceful uses of music. In Part III, Healing and Education, Vegar Jordanger shows how collective vulnerability can be an antidote for cultural violence, and Maria Elena Lopez Vinader gives an expert account of the power of music therapy. In Part IV, Stories from the Field, Olivier Urbain describes the work of Yair Dalal for peace in the Middle-East.

Chapter 2: "Music: A Universal Language?" by Cynthia Cohen.

In this chapter the author asks: is music truly a universal language? Music's power derives, in part, from its ability to create and strengthen feelings of affinity and group cohesion. These feelings can be cultivated in the service of peace, but also for evil. Warriors obviously can use music's resources with harmful results, but artist-peacebuilders who try to create feelings of affinity without doing the hard work necessary to challenge dynamics of oppression can do a lot of harm too. Furthermore when musical elements are borrowed from different contexts, it is important to pay attention to distinct cultural meanings, such as the sacred dimensions of performance. Examples drawn from practitioners working in different conflict regions show that, in many instances, it is not music's universal appeal that gives it much of its power as a peacebuilding resource, but rather recognition of the distinctive meanings that emerge from its place in historical events and cultural traditions.

This chapter ends with a discussion of some of the ethical issues that arise when we bring musical elements from one culture into another. Especially in the face of globalization, we should be aware of the differences in access to resources and power enjoyed by musicians of different cultures. Finally, the



author offers a set of questions we can consider in order to enhance the efficacy and minimize the ethical risks inherent in musical work for peace.

Chapter 3: “Music and Value in Cross-cultural Work” by June Boyce-Tillman.

How can the way we bring cultures together musically reflect ethical ways of cultural interaction? How can we use music to promote empathy, creativity and non-violence? How can it be used in active peace-making? Can we see the exploration of ways of examining music as resistance to dominant Western value systems? Is this a way of challenging the individualistic, materialistic, consumerist, earth-ravaging Westerner? To examine these questions, the author uses a frame for looking at music through various lenses that interact, entitled Materials, Expression, Construction, Values and Spirituality.

Chapter 8: “Unpeaceful Music” by George Kent.

Music can help to make the world a more peaceful place, but it has a dark side as well. There is music that celebrates war, viciousness, hate, and humiliation. Music has the power to heal, but it also has the power to hurt. Music is peaceful or unpeaceful not because of the inherent character of the music itself, but because of the way it is used. Unpeaceful music may build fellowship among some people at the expense of others. For example, a racist ditty may send a message of fellowship to racists as it offends those who are victimized. When music is hurtful to some groups, it is unpeaceful. Music can contribute to peace, but that contribution is limited so long as it is held captive by those in power. However, there are openings, free spaces in which music can be used in a way that fulfills its potentials for peace.

Chapter 10: Healing Cultural Violence: Collective Vulnerability through Guided Imagery with Music by Vegar Jordanger.

This chapter explores an application of peacemaking with music in Crimea, organized and facilitated by the author. Guided Imagery with Music (GIM) was introduced at a critical phase of a dialogue with Chechen, North-Ossetian and Russian participants. It demonstrates the transformation of group emotional tensions into a flowing “moment” called collective vulnerability. It explains the contributions of several thinkers to a theoretical understanding of these processes.

Chapter 11: “Music Therapy: Healing, Growth, Creating a Culture of Peace” by Maria Elena Lopez Vinader.

This chapter explores how music is used for healing and rehabilitation in Music Therapy and also its roles for creating a culture of peace. The frameworks for treatment, “A Continuum of Awareness” as well as Logotherapy and the Transcend Method are defined and illustrated. The work of Music Therapists for Peace is presented with experiences in this innovative field, which harnesses the positive power of music.

Chapter 14: Art for Harmony in the Middle East: The Music of Yair Dalal.

This chapter presents the work of Israeli composer, singer, oud player and violinist Yair Dalal, who believes that Jews and Arabs have so much in common that there is no reason to argue or fight along cultural identity lines. He thinks it is more useful to rebuild one’s identity on a larger basis, and widely declares that he is an “Arab Israeli Jew.” This chapter highlights episodes in Yair Dalal’s experiences that explain why he affirms his mixed identity, and how his philosophy of peace is translated into his musical work. Social constructionism is the main theoretical framework.



Three New Presentations at IPRA 2008

Vegar Jordanger presents “Verbal and Musical Dialogues in the North-Caucasus: Creating Transnational Citizenship through Art.” He describes the “Peace through Art Project” (PTA) in order to study the emergence of transnational citizenship in the South-East of Europe. Gathering musicians from Chechnya, Russia, Kenya and Norway in Southern Russia, the project enabled participants to transcend enemy images, and to enable them to engage in genuine dialogue. PTA culminated with a peace concert where improvised music was performed and broadcast on Russian and Chechen television channels. The initial idea was born and developed by Chechen, Russian and North-Ossetian participants at a seminar in Crimea in September 2004. This successful session is described in the author’s original chapter in the *Music and Conflict Transformation* book.

Cynthia Cohen presents a 17 minute DVD to illustrate the main ideas of her book chapter. It features the work of an intercultural residency series at Brandeis University (USA) and the music of Yuval Ron, an Israeli Jew who creates original music based on early Sufi Muslim music, early Jewish melodies, and early Armenian Christian music. It shows how the presentations by the Yuval Ron ensemble triggered very meaningful conversations and relationships on the campus of Brandeis University (Cohen 2008).

June Boyce-Tillman has combined the content of the chapter summarized above and of her other chapter in the book, namely Chapter 15 entitled “Music and Peacemaking in Educational Contexts.” She explores the power dynamics present in the DVD mentioned above, using the lenses and value systems presented in her book chapters.

Music and Sustainability: Some Thoughts for Brainstorming

The theme of the 2008 IPRA conference is “Building Sustainable Futures: Enacting Peace and Development,” as mentioned in the introduction of this paper. Can music and musicians contribute anything to sustainability? In the concluding section of this paper, the concept of “Sustainable Peace” is introduced, and the potential roles of music in its realization are explored.

“Sustainable peace” includes at least three elements: respect for and protection of the environment, social justice, and global awareness of our common humanity. If environmental destruction is not halted, if global warming continues unabated, if climate change becomes more and more chaotic, whatever measure of peace we achieve now will be obliterated. Indeed there can be no peace without basic human security. The same can be said about social justice. People who are oppressed and exploited are bound to revolt at some point or another, destroying whatever superficial stability had been reached. Without global awareness of our common humanity, people will always be tempted to defend the group they identify with, to the detriment of their perceived “enemies.” How can music contribute to the three elements making up sustainable peace as described above?

One way music can contribute to environmental sustainability is by enriching our inner lives. It will be very difficult to ask people to stop participating in our take-make-waste society unless there is an appealing alternative to the superficial but irresistible calls of materialism. By enabling people to elevate their spiritual worlds and by enhancing their capacity to “be” rather than to “have,” music can serve as an antidote against the greed that drives contemporary consumerist societies.

Music can contribute to social justice by enabling more people to participate in community life. People who play music together and get to know each other in a more intimate way through the arts find it easier to promote structures based on solidarity and human care instead of competition and selfishness.

Finally, by enabling people to reach deeper levels of mutual respect by enhancing the perception of their common humanity, music can contribute to the strengthening of a global awareness, to an understanding that we are all part of the same planetary family. This loyalty to the whole of humankind first, and not to any specific national or other group, is what is most needed today to combat violence.



Johan Galtung distinguishes between three types of violence: cultural, structural and direct (Galtung 1996). Cultural violence (discrimination and prejudice) can be reduced by developing identities grounded on global citizenship. Structural violence (oppression and exploitation), can be prevented by humane global governance ensuring justice for all. Direct violence (killing and hurting) can be countered by constructing a global civilization where the protection of life would become the highest priority.

These three elements of sustainable peace (global citizenship, global governance and global civilization) will only be possible when a critical mass of people recognize the humanity in each individual regardless of their background and origin. Beyond the trappings of power structures, titles and decorations, music can enable people to see what is truly important, the highest human potential inside each individual.

References

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