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Mystery, Fire and Intrigue
Representation and Commodification of Race in Band Literature
By

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Abstract

This article is a critical examination of ostensibly multicultural music for concert bands. Using Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, I argue that "multicultural" band music, while celebrating diversity and inclusion, actually do the opposite—they are instead, created and used as tools that reproduce stereotypes and racial tropes. This system—where the symbolically violent act of racial tropes are misrecognized as such and celebrated as lessons in diversity—helps reify and perpetuate racial inequalities in society.

Students come in for their lesson and quickly assemble their instruments. I show them a piece based on the pentatonic scale that they have never seen before. A student, who is of Thai decent, says "hey this sounds Chinese!"

Seventh grade students, ages 12 and 13, enter the band room and proceed to their lockers to take out their instruments for rehearsal. Amidst the din of practicing, students are talking and joking around with one another. One student approaches the congas and yells "I'm like those African people Ah!...." and proceeds to recklessly and haplessly bang on the drums. The other students take notice and laugh.

Another student, while working on a group composition hits the gong, puts the palms of his hands together as if in prayer and bows. "What was that about?" I say. He responds "I'm *being* Chinese."

These anecdotes from my classroom display the complex intertwining of race¹ and music. These experiences as well as countless others like these compelled me to ask if I was complicit, through choice of repertoire and curricula, in these constructions of racial difference. Since the 1980s the multiculturalism movement has been a voice in the mainstream of band education. But because of experiences like these, I have come to question the role, efficacy and assumptions of multicultural education in band. Very recently there has been a look at how music education and race influence each other (Morton, 2000, ed. Regelski, 2005).² I look to contribute to this discussion by examining the repertoire and practices of music teachers, specifically how this is enacted in the concert band. At the heart of this examination is the question *how does multiculturalism and other representations of race in band music contribute to my and my students' ordering, classification and policing of race?*

Representation and Commodification of Difference in Commercially Available Band Literature

I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'!"

—Frantz Fanon (1967, p. 112)

I start our investigation in the seemingly unlikely place of popular culture. The classic movie *King Kong* (1933) and its contemporary remake (2005) can provide insight into the reified epistemology that informs multicultural band literature. In *King Kong* the

¹ Race is a polysemic term that has received many transformations. Race is used in the US—in its most common, reified, colloquial form—as an indicator of phenotypic and cultural difference. This paper, for purposes of critically examining this definition's influence on band literature, will most closely adopt this definition (Omi & Winant, 1994, Winant, 2000, Hannaford, 1996, Michaels, 1992).

² There is also, of course, the well-established body of multicultural music education research (cf. Mark, 1996 and Lundquist, 2002), most notably work by Volk, 1998 and Campbell, 1994, 1996). While this body of research has traditionally been associated with issues of correct rendition of “authentic” music of other cultures, this article looks at how racial difference is created and represented in band literature.

giant, menacing ape Kong is captured by a White film maker and entrepreneur and brought back to the US to be viewed by curious American observers. Upon their arrival to the “mysterious” island that Kong inhabits, the film maker and his entourage antagonize the offensively and stereotypically portrayed dark-skinned, “primitive savages.”³ These primitive, indigenous people of this island who have offered up adolescent girls as sacrifices have ineffectively protected themselves against Kong. The Westerners, scoffing at the savages’ “backward, irrational, pseudo-religious” practices, come with the effective tools of positivism and rationality to capture Kong. However, the savages, overcome with the incomparable beauty of the White woman of the entourage, steal her and offer her up as the female sacrifice *par excellence*. But through a struggle with Kong and the Natives themselves, the Western men using these tools that the savages lack—namely dynamite, chemical weapons, guns, and a rational, well thought-out plan—capture Kong and bring him back to the United States.

When brought to the US, Kong is displayed for curious White observers, but escapes to wreak havoc on the city of New York and again steal the female lead. He then, of course, famously demolishes several buildings and a train and mounts the Empire State Building. Eventually using airplanes, the Americans shoot Kong and he falls to his demise.

Informing this popular story is a mix of racism, sexuality and a simultaneous fear and fascination with the exotic and that which is different and foreign. The plot can be read as such; Kong is a metaphor for the fascination White observers have for the exotic,

³ To be sure, terms, such as “savage,” “primitive,” “natives,” “pretty blond White girl,” etc., that have racial “baggage” are used as signifiers to examine the ways of thinking under current scrutiny and does not represent my personal choice of language. But with such use of language we can begin to “unpack” the “baggage” attached to these terms.

libidinal, ostensibly backward, “other” world they had spent colonizing over the previous three hundred years. He is a gigantic curio to be contained and gazed upon. This appeal is due to his girth and great physical strength, his insatiable sexuality—directed towards the “universal” object of sexual desire, the “pretty blond White girl”—and his pseudo-humanity. He is viewed as half man, half beast; his humanism is peppered with atavistic animalism and obversely, his instinctually animal desires and actions have a hint of human emotion.

But there is a concomitant fear associated with this fascination. If the Westerner gives over fully to this desire to observe the “other’s” sexuality and exoticism it may illicit the fall of Western civilization. This curiosity with Kong leads to his escape, destruction of the city and the absconding with their most prized possession, again, a pretty blond White girl. His surmounting of the Empire State Building is the clearest metaphor of this. With White female in hand, he climbs the overtly phallic edifice as a sign of dominance over masculine Western sexuality. But in addition to its phallic symbolism, the Empire State Building, in 1933, was the tallest building in the world. It stood as a symbol and a product of Western positivism. Kong’s scaling of the building suggests that fascination with the other could overcome and topple all the progress that the West had achieved as well as steal and defile their women.

But of course it is Kong himself who is subdued and killed. This is because the fear of the transgression of fascination is not turned inward on the White observer but instead is directed towards the object of desire (hooks, 1992). Ultimately, the physical damage is repairable; the Empire State Building remains intact, the pretty White girl is unharmed and Western Society prevails but Kong must pay with his life because the

White observers' curiosity went awry. This takes on a very personal dynamic in the 1933 version as the writer and director of *King Kong*, Merian C. Cooper, and the producer cast themselves as the pilot and the gunner of the plane that destroys Kong.⁴

As you might imagine, music plays a role in the conception and depiction of this story. The scoring of the film reinforces prejudices about “others.” The opening segment of the film, taking place in New York City—where only White characters appear on screen—is scored with lush romanticism and chromaticism, associated with the sophistication of White society (Middleton, 2001). The harp, an instrument of aristocracy and representing high society, receives a prominent scoring.

Once the Westerners set sail, their ominous approach to the mysterious island is heralded by music. “We’re close” says the film maker, “How do you know” asks the woman, “I hear the drums” he replies. From that moment on, the score makes a drastic change, the sophisticated chromaticism and harp give way to crude, simple open fifths and drums, representing and accentuating the indigenous people’s savageness and primitivism.

When the movie returns to New York City, with the incarcerated Kong, the score again makes a drastic change. Rather than returning to the romanticism and chromaticism that accompanied the first scenes in New York City, the primitive drums and open fifths of the mysterious island give way to the modern and urban music of Swing Jazz. Drums, saxophones and trumpets become the main instruments in the scoring. The links the music makes are subtle but clear; there is a close relationship between the primitive music of the savages and the “primitive-like” music of “Hot Jazz.”

⁴ The director of the 2005 version, Peter Jackson, also cast himself as the gunner that kills Kong.

Such a connection of course is not merely musical criticism but also a comment on the progenitors and main performers of Jazz, namely African-Americans.

The mainstream popularity of jazz, primitivism and race during the Great Depression is entangled within *King Kong*'s story of fear and fascination. According to Ronald Radano (2001), jazz, rhythm and percussion instruments have served as metonyms for African and African-American's perceived overt sexuality and primitivism. The pulsating, repetitive, yet enticing rhythm of ethnic, African drums and African-American Jazz was conceived of as the libidinal drive of the primitive. For White audiences this was considered alluring and literally and metaphorically contagious. But this attraction to the music that uncontrollably and erotically commandeered the body was also a bugaboo; there was a great fear that giving into these urges would corrupt the White individual and society as a whole and there was a need to "keep it in check" and contain it within so-called reasonable grounds. Gershwin's *Fascinating Rhythm*, based on the rhythms of "Hot Jazz," is an example of this intrigue with African-American culture but also a need to contain and define it within the Western Classical Music context (Radano, 2001 and Middleton, 2001). So during the 1930s the popularity of Jazz was seen as an enticing threat to White, Middle-class ideals, perhaps as hip-hop was seen during its early years of wide-spread popularity and commercial success (Koza, 2003). *King Kong*'s use of music to delineate who was sophisticated, and who was primitive and the linking of primitivism to modern Jazz are embedded in the larger context of mainstream popular culture and racism during this time.

The concurrent fascination and fear of the Other, conflated with sexuality, contagion and music via drums and the mainstreaming of jazz in *King Kong* can serve as

nothing more than an example of the effects of racism during the 1930s. However, *King Kong* has experienced a resurgence through a remake by the director of the *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, Peter Jackson. The salient features of the film remain the same between the two versions. The “savages’ backward” ways are still prevalent, but now they are depicted as eerily frightening, zombie-like cannibals lead by a witch-like matriarch; Kong still desires and steals the pretty girl, destroys the city, climbs the Empire State Building, and is killed.

But this is where band education comes into the discussion. Like many lucrative, high-budget blockbuster movies, *King Kong*'s (2005) soundtrack arranged for band, at various levels of difficulty, is available for purchase. The racist rhetoric that accompanies both the 1933 and 2005 versions transverses into the classroom with these band arrangements. For example, a beginner band arrangement of the piece (Murphy & Crockarell, 2005) is explained in a catalog as such: “This...tune will really bring out the "ape" in your band! You'll need some African drums, a tribe, and lots of bananas to feed the monkeys!” (J. W. Pepper Catalog, 2006a). Apparently, in order for this work to have students act like apes they need to act like a tribe and use African drums. Such language in 2006 is quite alarming indeed.

Another arrangement for marching band entitled *King Kong Finale* (Bocook & Rapp, 2005), has “a unique percussion section feature utilizing all percussionists from the battery and pit playing ethnic instruments” (J. W Pepper Catalog, 2006b). The recording available for listening (J. W Pepper Catalog, 2006c) shows a distinct ABA form, where there are so-called Western (A-sections) and “ethnic” (B-section) parts. The first, “Western” part is characterized by relatively complex writing and use of advanced

technical ability; in this part, no “ethnic” percussion instruments are used, the wind instruments use syncopated rhythms and sixteenth notes, the brass instruments use double tonguing and the harmonies are dense and dissonant. It is more technically demanding and compositionally more complicated. The “ethnic” section, by comparison, is simpler in nature. Introduced by a stereotypically “ethnic-sounding” vocalization by the band and the inclusion of shakers, the complicated rhythms and harmonies are watered down to a repetitive, ostinato rhythm of $\theta\epsilon\epsilon\theta$ (Quarter, eight, eight quarter) and the brass instruments play a conjunct melody of dotted half notes with sparse, simple, hallow harmonies. The repetition of the ethnic section does grow in complexity but just as this complexity builds the ethnic percussion instruments disappear and the intricacies of the final Western section are allowed to reconstitute themselves and the music takes on a triumphant quality. Here the fascination and fear takes a musical form; the complexity of Western music *can* incorporate the repetitive, simplistic rhythm of “ethnic” music but for it to reach the level of sophistication required it must be taken over by Western music and this containment and domination of “ethnic” music is cause for triumph.

Both versions of *King Kong* and the band arrangements of the score tap into and represent this fascination and fear of the “other.” In a society that increasingly comes in contact with other people and other ways of being, curiosity and trepidation are two of many reactions to the uncertainty that may arise. Some might argue—erroneously I believe—that criticisms of this kind of reaction or the band arrangements of *King Kong* are unwarranted because they are conceived of as fun, apolitical entertainment not marketed or used by teachers as multicultural works. But more importantly, there are examples of compositions, labeled as multicultural, that harbor these same views and

rhetoric of race. The following catalog explanation for a composition by the prolific and popular band composer Robert W. Smith (1994) shows an example of this type of work:

Africa: Ceremony, Song and Ritual

With all of the mystery, fire and intrigue of the *Dark Continent*, Robert W. Smith has created a work of gigantic scope. Driven by a large percussion section, it's challenging, multi-cultural and *fascinating*. In the final movement the composer even suggests encircling the audience with percussion for an incredible effect. A stunning work that we highly recommend! (J. W. Pepper Catalog, 2005, italics added).

This work is clearly defined as “multi-cultural” but within this piece there are the same typical tropes of racist rhetoric embedded in the “entertaining” *King Kong* works. The most obvious is the description of the so-called Dark Continent; dark being not only a reductionist reference to the complexion of its inhabitants’ skin, but also a perceived inferiority in intellect, as well as a place ungoverned by the laws of the enlightenment and rationality. This term is, of course, a vestige of Victorian colonialism and imperialism (Brantlinger, 1985). Maybe less obviously—but still explicitly—this description quickly portrays Africa as a single-minded, monolithic, one-dimensional, mono-cultural continent laden with drums. Such a description denies a difference between Northern, Southern and Western Africa, the different cultures of the modern nation states, the differences of tribes and ethnic groups or any other subcategory that may be created. Debate can be made about which are useful categorizations but no attempt is made to address a more detailed look at African cultures (plural). Still worse, this portrayal of Africa is a product of the present that conjures up a fictitious past. Rather than creating the picture of the romanticized, happy, drumming savage that does not and never did exist, it would be more valuable to address contemporary African issues such as Genocide in Dalfour, and the international community’s inadequate response, the servitude created by the diamond

trade for Western consumers and civil unrest in Zimbabwe as well as countless other issues that do not get even the minimal coverage Africa receives in the Western media.

But more germane, we see fascination and fear rear its ugly head in the scoring and staging of this piece. The consumption of “ethnic” music must include vigilance. The composer’s performance instructions to encircle the audience with percussion represents the subconscious thought that listeners’ curious consumption of the ethnic might eventually lead to their own surrounding and consumption. Just as in *King Kong*, where the observers’ fears realize themselves in his escape, in *Africa*, fears become real when “ethnic others,” and the musical instruments that have been used to fetishize them, surround and contain the audience. This fear is contingent on the centuries-old racist trope of cannibalism. Inaccurate and exaggerated claims of African and Pacific indigenous societies participating in wide-spread cannibalism was used to portray non-Westerners as cruel, backward savages ready, willing and able to devour a Westerner at any moment (Arens, 1979, Brantlinger, 1985). Smith’s piece—even if only indirectly, vaguely and highly abstracted and stylized—conjures up consumptive savages encircling their prey ready to viciously devour other humans, playing on unexamined stereotypes of indigenous people. Through this an incongruent message is sent; the Westerners’ consumption of difference is seen as benignly curious and multicultural while the non-Westerners’ consumption is cannibalistic.

Africa: Ceremony, Song and Ritual appears to be an egregiously insensitive example of multicultural band music. But there is a ubiquitous and insidious subgenre of multicultural band music that on its surface may seem more sensitive to multicultural ideals. There are many educational band works with titles like *Chant and Tribal Dance*

(Shaffer, 2002a), *Ceremony, Chant and Ritual* (Shaffer, 2002b), *Chant and Savage Dance* (Balmages, 2005), *Tribal Dance* (Balmages, 2007), *Tribal Drums* (Schaffer, 2000), *Ancient Ritual* (Del Borgo, 1998), etc. These works evoke images of a primitive “Other” without specifying a particular geographic area or people. They do so by conjuring up common tropes of the primitive other. These works serve very specific ends in a curriculum that wants to present the semblance of multiculturalism but does not want to actually acknowledge alternative and dissonant voices. These works justify the Westerner’s view as being a unique rational being in a world of primitive savages and does nothing to decenter a eurocentric view of the world. Simple performance indicators can clue us into this; many times these works are accompanied with performance marking like *Ritmico* or *Mysterioso*. The Italian use of these terms is no accident; the *lingua franca* of Western Classical music has been Italian and the use of this language shows embedded in these pieces about “others” is the position of the Westerner.

If the goal of multicultural music education is to learn about different cultures, and to decenter students’ americo-centric views through experiences with culturally different music, then we have to question the efficacy of these works. If the same racial tropes, rhetoric and stereotypes that are embedded in entertainment are present in these multicultural works, then they do nothing to decenter those americo-centric views.

“Multicultural” Band Music as a Form of Violence

In a society of complex controls, both crude
and refined, secret thoughts can often be
found in the arts.

—Howard Zinn (2003, p. 443)

The cynical view would be to take a cavalier reaction to these types of works; a so-called “commonsensical” view is to think that as ignorant and prejudicial these works are, they are merely representations. A sort of “sticks and stones may break my bones” logic would lead us to believe they are harmless, and such a view is “just reading into it too much.” But to what effect do these representations influence band students’ construction of race? To what effect does it contribute to the racial inequalities that plague our society as a whole?

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) theories of how the economic field and the cultural field influence one another can properly situate these questions. Within these theories, the concepts of *habitus* and *symbolic violence* are most useful to our discussion.

Densely written, Bourdieu defines *habitus*:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principals of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (1977, p. 72)

Habitus is formed by the lived everyday world. The things, people and ways of being that we interact with everyday form what we believe and what we consider to be true. Because our experiences are subjective, the truths we form based on those experiences are not universal or objective. But because what we experience is all that we know, we mistaken our experience as such—as universal and objective.

In other words, habitus is our truth formed from our everyday lived world but our everyday lived world makes us read the origins of truth and actions backwards. Our

habitus makes us think that our beliefs dictate our actions, but in actuality it is the way we act—or more accurately the way our society has inculcated us to act—that dictates what we believe. So, in Bourdieu’s terms, “structured structures” (ways of being and acting that are contingent on place but are inaccurately thought to be universal laws) are predisposed, or mistakenly viewed as “structuring structures” (universal laws that cause ways of acting).

Habitus is not formed as the overt will of one class, or group of people, and exerted on other groups of people as (say) the Marxists might view it. Instead, habitus becomes a reified way of being that leads to self policing. Habitus is self reproducing; ideological and coercive origins of everyday practices are concealed, allowing subjects to continue these practices even if they are not in their best interests.

An example of habitus comes from the Kabylia people of Algeria, who Bourdieu observed and formed his theories around. For the Kabylia, the market is the most important public space. It is where commerce as well as social gatherings take place. Women and men occupy the market in different locations as well as different times of the day. This is due to the temporal and spatial patterns of division of labors—women leave early to retrieve the day’s water and men leave later and take a different path to farm and conduct business of the day in the market. These social orders, which to some degree are arbitrary, make up the everyday lived experience. The Kabylia people believe this separation of genders is a universal truth necessary for society to function. In a false syllogism, they conclude that their actions are based on these truths, when it is the opposite; their arbitrary, subjective division of labor has them believe that gender separation is the only way their society can function.

Robert Middleton (2001 & 1993) has applied the concept of habitus to music. Within Western aesthetics, music has generally been thought to be a transformative experience; the power of the aesthetic experience is *discursive*, allowing the participants to be transported and transformed in a metaphorical time and space. “Yet there have been arguments that much of music’s power stems from a capacity to slip the leash of [sic, off?] these discursive mechanisms, engaging us on a less reflective level” (Middleton, 2001, p. 78). This “gestural habitus,” as he calls it, can make us “feel at home” (p. 78). This concept can be a positive analytical tool to understand canonical Western music and more importantly music outside of this canon. It can explain, for example, why many rap songs sample funk licks of the 1970s; contemporary rap artists, and some of their audience, growing up in that decade associate music of their childhood with home. But gestural habitus, as Middleton stated, can show how music can engage us on a less reflective level and play on our assumptions, prejudices and reified beliefs.

So, as an obvious example, Robert W. Smith’s *Africa* is not multicultural in the sense that it somehow transports our students to that culture so we may learn new things. Quite to the contrary, it anchors our students in the most local of contexts, their own subjectivity, and already held beliefs about African culture. The practice, performance and consumption of this piece only reinforce their viewpoint and they mistakenly take the composition as yet more evidence to support the verisimilitude of their beliefs.

Within the “multicultural” body of literature we are critically examining, unquestioned habitus, and the gestural habitus that mediates it, dictates our views of the “other.” Smith’s piece *Africa*, other so-called multicultural pieces and more obviously the pop culture movie *King Kong*, are received and understood because the audience

knows these feelings of fascination and fear and, to a degree, feels comfortable with them. But we must also acknowledge another aspect of habitus; that participation in works of art like these are not only reproductive of fear and fascination but are also productive, in that they, in part, help form the participants' views of race. This is particularly pernicious when we take into account the age of band students. The acquisition of the habitus of a particular culture is not a mechanical learning like one would memorize a series of letters that do not form words; it is, conversely, the learning of the overarching-structure that dictates practices. Therefore what the child assimilates is "the product of the systematic application of principles coherent in practice, which means, that in all this endlessly redundant material, he [sic] has no difficulty in grasping the *rationale* of what are clearly series and in making his own in the form of a principle generating conduct organized in accordance with the same rationale" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 88, italics in original). So, the learning of *Africa*, for example, is a learning of the racial rules and habitus that dictate and shape its composition, performance and reception. Such works, when unexamined, only reinforce *and* create a habitus of fear and fascination of the "other."

This seems blatantly antithetical to multicultural education and education in general. If the goal of multicultural education is the experience of new ways of being and new knowledge through the examination of different cultures, then works that uncritically present already possessed, common racial tropes and reinforce the habitus-like hold they have on us are uneducative or even antieducative.

However, as useful as habitus is in a critique of multicultural band literature, it can easily have us remain in an important but insufficient discussion about "best

practice.” “Best practice”—not coincidentally a buzz word of the current move to standardize education known as *No Child Left Behind*—merely engages us in a debate in how to tweak the current system. It would follow that we could investigate ways to challenge students’ habitus in relation to race. This form of inquiry is insufficient as a discourse to spark pedagogical change because it does not answer a fundamental question; how does multicultural band music contribute to teachers’ and students’ ordering, classification and policing of race?

Bourdieu (1977) looks at how habitus can serve as a tool in the domination of others. In societies where physical violence is not condoned, or is not the most effective or efficient way to maintain hierarchies, people use, what he calls, *symbolic violence* to maintain those hierarchies. More explicitly, symbolic violence is the inherent but unrecognized violence that is maintained and naturalized within systems of inequality and domination. But in order for this symbolic violence to be effective the parties involved must *misrecognize* it; they must fail to see it as a mode of domination and believe it to be doxological—or the only way things can be—and even beneficial to all parties.

Bourdieu observed these actions in the Kabylia people; an action as ostensibly benevolent as giving a gift is an act of symbolic violence. Gift giving is an act of power for two reasons. The first and obvious power dynamic of gift giving is the symbol of the power of the giver. She displays her economic viability as well as draws attention to the receiver’s inability to create the same good through the bestowing of the gift. Secondly, when someone gives a gift they are creating a debt. The receiver remembers the generosity of the gift and is indebted to that generosity. The receiver, from the moment

the gift is accepted, must respond obsequiously and graciously. This, of course, creates an asymmetrical relationship between the giver and receiver and serves as a subtle form of domination. Gift giving is symbolically violent because this dominating aspect is *misrecognized* or lost on the participants. It is also accepted and socially recognized as a friendly gesture of benevolence given at times of joy—such as birthdays, religious holidays and in response to other forms of generosity—and is seen as purely positive.

At the end of Bourdieu's observations of symbolic violence in this pre-capitalist society in Algeria, he attempts to make a connection to contemporary Western society. He claims the symbolically violent tactics the Kabylia use manifest themselves in art and the patronage of art in our society. The concluding sentence of his book connects symbolic violence to Westerners' use of music:

The world of art, a sacred island systematically and ostentatiously opposed to the profane, everyday world of production, a sanctuary for gratuitous, disinterested activity in a universe given over to money and self-interest, offers...an imaginary anthropology obtained by denial of all the negations really brought about by the economy (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 197).

In other words, Bourdieu states that the arts are a political space where symbolic violence is exerted but is *misrecognized* as an apolitical endeavor that is removed from and denies the economic hierarchy. This is an observation that educators of music and other arts should seriously heed. According to Bourdieu, one of the functions of art is to exert symbolic violence; to order people in a hierarchy of haves and have-nots and to reproduce and perpetuate this asymmetrical system. The so-called finer sensibilities—like an appreciation for classical music and other “high brow music”—are assigned a privileged milieu and are the domain of the economically wealthy. Concomitantly, popular music and its “low brow status” are inferior. These tastes and their inferior or

superior statuses correlate to economic wealth and class. But because music is seen as an abstract art, removed from social factors like economic wealth, love of high brow music is seen as solely a matter of personal choice. This conceals and makes us *misrecognize* the invidious and symbolically violent aspects of music.⁵

Representations of race that oppress people are clearly a cog in the machine of symbolic violence in music. They are signals, communications and tools that maintain hierarchies down racial lines that are *misrecognized* and not seen as maintaining that racial hierarchy. They create dubious distinctions between sophisticated White culture, and “ethnic” inferior, primitive drum laden “others.” Rather than recognizing and acknowledging the overt racism of works like *King Kong* or *Africa: Ceremony Song and Ritual*, these works are labeled apolitical, fun entertainment (as in the case of *King Kong*) or as in *Africa: Ceremony Song and Ritual*, seen as serving goals contrary to their actual outcome, namely being an educational tool of multiculturalism and inclusion.

But more importantly, they aid in the creation, maintenance and policing of racial categories. The multicultural rhetoric that surrounds these invidious practices is concealed and *misrecognized* as inclusive and celebratory of difference. These practices exert, maintain and reproduce asymmetrical binaries like White/Black, First World/Third World and their repugnant economic corollary of rich/poor. These racial and financial issues are the most urgent crises that both the United States and international communities face in the twenty-first century. Do these more severe forms of symbolic violence influence this type of band literature and conversely, does this band music contribute to these larger tools of symbolic violence?

⁵ These theories of the arts as an ordering tool that reproduce social hierarchies is more explicitly explained in Bourdieu (1993).

I hope this question makes you take pause as it has done for me; is the current multiculturalism movement in band actually promulgating violence? This is a serious question, because it is one thing to say that contemporary multiculturalism is not the best way to include difference in our classrooms and another matter all together to say it actually creates violence. But this aspect seems to be present in these works. And I personally did not knowingly become a music educator to create inequitable hierarchies and exert control and domination over others through representations in art.

Here again we must adopt the cynic's gaze; is the use of the term violence improper? Does it water down the severity of physical violence when we talk about symbolic violence? It is true that Bourdieu calls symbolic violence the "gentle violence" (1977, p. 192 and 196), and it does not have the immediacy that physical violence warrants. But it is this lack of immediacy that makes symbolic violence so insidious. If symbolic violence was not *misrecognized* and socially recognized it would illicit the immediate reaction that physical violence calls for. But because of this, the wounds that these forms of domination inflict are left to fester and reproduce inequitable hierarchies and classifications in our society. Therefore the use of violence in symbolic violence, as an analogical, metaphorical or literal concept is apt.

What then should be done about symbolic violence in the classroom? It is important we address this because, as the three observations from my classroom that began the paper suggest, students acknowledge and internalize the racial rhetoric embedded in music and discourse about music. Ostensibly music as a tool of symbolic violence has no place in the rehearsal room, for it can only contribute to the structural racism of society at large. When music becomes a means, whether consciously or not, to

create racial inequalities, we abdicate our responsibilities as teachers of the arts to, as Maxine Greene states, “awaken [our students] to reflectiveness” (1986, p. 428). Conceivably, if we fail to help them awaken to this reflectiveness, students’ musical practices and practices in general outside the classroom will also contain symbolically violent racial inequalities. A nihilistic approach then would be to abandon the spirit of multiculturalism. Though terribly flawed, addressing cultural difference is a necessary and noble cause. It would be in ill faith and smacking of, what anthropologist Renato Resaldo (1989) calls, “imperialist nostalgia” to return to the so-called classics of band literature. This does nothing more than play the role of the proverbial ostrich with its head in the sand. Instead, when we approach any musical representation of a group of people we must concomitantly investigate our own subject position and reflectively ask if our investigation “of other peoples and other times is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes” (Said, 1978, p. *xix*), or only reinforces our narrow habitus.

There is band literature that attempts to question the symbolically-violent dominant conceptions of racial rhetoric. In the program notes to his work *Trail of Tears*, John Barnes writes:

I wrote this piece because I believe it is imperative that we remain constantly aware that we are just as capable as any other nation of committing crimes against people who are weaker or different from us, regardless of our form of government and no matter what high aspirations we might espouse every year on the Fourth of July. One needs only to recall the internment in concentration camps of all Japanese-Americans on the West Coast and Hawaii during those first dark months of World War II to realize that events such as the *Trail of Tears* are still within the realm of possibility in this “Land of the Free and Home of the Brave”. We must continue to acknowledge these highly distasteful episodes in our history in order to insure that drastic over-reactions such as these do not recur in the future of our nation (1989).

But, playing the piece alone will not achieve the lofty goals Barnes ascribes to his work; however it can become a starting place, with careful investigation by teacher and student, to address these issues musically.

Despite all of this, it does not necessarily follow that pieces like *Africa* and *King Kong* do not belong in the classroom. Paradoxically, these pieces may be the most appropriate material to awaken reflectiveness. Their obvious racial rhetoric of stereotypes may provide material for students and teacher to investigate such use of music. What is more important are the pedagogies that surround these works; left unexamined, these works reify racial symbolic violence; questioned, they awaken us to reflectiveness and potentially stop the cycle of violence.

The fascination, fear and the symbolic violence exerted through so-called “multicultural” music points to an invidious, destructive side of music education. Left unexamined, the classroom can be a site to exert domination and violence and reinforce pernicious stereotypes and tropes that support an ill-informed habitus. But through constant and careful investigation they can be a productive site where these modes of domination are subverted. And how this new multicultural pedagogy is enacted is the task ahead of us as practitioners and teacher trainers.

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