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A brave new world: theory to practice in participatory culture and music learning and teaching

Janice Waldron[a], Roger Mantie[b]*, Heidi Partti[c]*,** and Evan S. Tobias[b]*

[a]School of Creative Arts: Music, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada; [b]School of Music, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA; [c]Department of Music, University of the Arts, London, UK

ABSTRACT

The four perspectives in this paper were first presented as an interactive research/workshop symposium at RIME 9. The purpose of the symposium was to connect new media scholar Henry Jenkins's theory of 'participatory culture' (1992, 2006, 2009) to possible practices of 'participatory culture' in diverse music teaching and learning contexts. We ask: If participatory culture exists in music learning contexts – what is it? What are its dimensions? What does participatory culture look like and mean in other music cultures and different contexts/'places' (e.g. online, offline, and convergent settings)? Who can and who can't participate? How might this idea cause us to re-think some of our practices?

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Introduction

Originally presented as an interactive research symposium at RIME 9, the four perspectives offered in this paper connect new media scholar Henry Jenkins's theory of 'participatory culture' (1992, 2006a, 2009) to possible practices of 'participatory culture' in diverse music teaching and learning contexts. Jenkins originally coined the term in 1992 to describe what happens when 'patterns of media consumption have been profoundly altered by a succession of new media technologies [thus] enabl[ing] average citizens to participate in the archiving, annotation, appropriation, transformation, and recirculation of media content'(1992, 2). In 2009, Jenkins updated this original definition when advocating for the inclusion of new media education in schools; it his contention that understanding how participatory culture 'works' has significant implications for developing new media education literacy and curricula (2009). Specifically, he explains that:

> A participatory culture has relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least, members care about others' opinions of what they have created). (2009, 5–6)

Although originally developed by Jenkins to explain affinity group development in new media contexts, we contend that his ideas of participatory culture also have significant ramifications for music education. We posit such questions as: If participatory culture exists in music learning contexts – what is it? What are its dimensions? What does participatory culture look like and mean

CONTACT Janice Waldron jwaldron@uwindsor.ca
*The contributions of Dr Mantie, Dr Partti, and Dr Tobias were all of equal importance/significance, length and word count in this article, they all have been listed as second authors in alphabetical order.
**Present address: Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland.
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in other music cultures and different contexts/'places' (e.g. online, offline, and convergent settings)? Who can and who can't participate? How might this idea cause us to re-think some of our practices?

Our four perspectives are presented in an order that takes the reader from the general to the specific. Perspective One presents an overview of participatory cultural practices in school music teaching and learning, while Perspective Two offers an example of the implications of participatory culture for Finnish music teacher education and the Finnish music education curriculum. Perspective Three illustrates how participatory culture is manifested in the now globally practiced genre of Irish traditional music along with its associated informal music learning practices. Perspective Four adopts a philosophical stance, exploring the potential import of 'participation' and 'participatory culture' for issues of access, inclusion and lifelong impact in music education.

Perspective One: drawing inspiration from participatory cultural practices for music teaching and learning

Largely operating in parallel streams that have recently begun to intersect, music education, and media studies offer valuable ways of conceptualising and addressing how people might participate in arts and culture in contemporary society. A key aspect of this work in media studies focuses on understanding how people produce new creative forms (expressions), shape the flow of media (circulations), engage in informal and formal memberships in online communities around forms of media (affiliations) and work together in formal or informal teams to complete tasks and develop new knowledge (collaborative problem-solving) (Jenkins et al. 2009). Technology and digital media often play significant roles in mediating these aspects of participatory culture, though participatory culture is neither reliant on or a result of digital media and technology. Recognising that research is needed to address participatory cultures specific to music engagement, teaching, and learning, music education might benefit from attending to the ways that people's expressions, circulations, collaborative problem-solving, and affiliations are digitally mediated in contemporary society.

In particular, music educators might explore the richness of participatory culture at the intersection of music and media to think expansively about what constitutes participation, the aims and goals of students, educators, and music programmes, and possibilities for music teaching and learning. Peppler (2013) suggests that arts education can play a role in developing an ecology of creative production that integrates media production and aspects of participatory culture with aspects of formal fine arts subjects in schools to 'show more youths how to become creators of their own media and art while also learning how to be critical and active participants in an artistic society' (13). To explore such possibilities I focus on three ways music educators might apply aspects of participatory culture in relation to music teaching and learning: (1) expanding musical practices we address in music education; (2) providing entry points for artistic inquiry and engaging with existing music; and (3) enlivening pedagogy and curriculum.

Expanding musical practices we address in music education

While some frame media studies perspectives on participatory culture (Jenkins 2006a, 2006b; Jenkins et al. 2009; Delwiche and Henderson 2013) as specific to media and media engagement, music educators are beginning to apply and in some cases modify these ideas for music teaching and learning contexts (Partti and Karlsen 2010; Waldron 2011a, 2011b, 2013; O'Neil and Peluso 2013; Tobias 2013; Cayari 2014; Tobias, VanKlompenberg, and Reid 2015). This work acknowledges how participation and musical engagement can take many forms. While the ethic involved in participatory culture as framed in media studies shares similarities with aspects of participatory performance as discussed in musicological contexts (Turino 2008), a broader range of musical engagement is emerging from or supported by participatory culture at the intersection of music and media. Understanding the spectrum of musical engagement through a lens of participatory culture calls for identifying

the expressions, circulations, affiliations, and collaborative problem-solving at play in relation to music and musical engagement.

Adopting aspects of participatory culture retains possibilities for music-making and opens spaces for additional forms of engagement. For instance, someone performing music (expression), might share their performance with others in a physical space or via the Internet in real-time or asynchronously by live-streaming or recording the music and distributing it across any number of web-based media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Periscope, blogs, SoundCloud, or other platforms (circulation). While sharing music through these varied channels could be considered an act of presentational performance, the process of sharing allows the music and media to circulate when others share it and possibly contribute their own expressions such as audio, video, or text comments or appropriations of the original music such as covers, remixes, or remediations (Tobias 2013). It is also possible for a performer to engage with others, such as members of a community of practice or those connected to her social media accounts (affiliations), and to share perspectives or make musical decisions in relation to the music (collaborative problem-solving).

Additionally, people might engage with music and media in ways that are not reliant upon or connected to performing. Some might modify the sound and music to videogames or arrange music within video game worlds by accessing tools designed for this purpose. Others might sample moments from a large number of video-recorded music and then assemble all of the samples into a seamless whole, often referred to as a 'supercut'. Still others might engage in ways that do not include making music, such as generating and sharing transcriptions of music in varied notation systems ranging from ocarina fingerings for a mobile app, to tablature, creating and sharing playlists, analysing and discussing similarities and differences between music, or sharing their perspectives through text, video recordings, or multimodal media. These acts involve people participating or engaging with and through music in ways they find interesting, enjoyable, or meaningful. Music educators might address diverse expressions, circulations, affiliations, and collaborative problem-solving to account for the manifold ways people engage with and through music that emerge from or are supported by participatory culture.

Providing entry points for artistic inquiry and existing music

Aspects of participatory culture provide a compelling context from which to take up questions about music and art that can expand how people experience and know the world, whether through reinvigorating aesthetic explorations of music or helping young people engage in artistic inquiry through their musical engagement. Music educators might situate participatory culture as both a goal in and of itself and as a means of encountering, attending to, and interpreting music in a participatory manner that can help young people think and act imaginatively (Greene 1995, 2002). This means helping students develop the skills and understanding to engage in participatory culture along with encouraging young people to explore aesthetic, ethical, or sociocultural issues through their engagement. For instance, along with technical issues and skills ranging from addressing tonality, tempo, style, or particular technologies pertaining to creating and circulating expressions such as remixes or mashups, a music educator might help young people consider the varied ways people interpret music, debate the role that a creator's intent might play in the ways that people engage with or experience music, or apply critical media literacy to recontextualise or speak back to music or social issues they find problematic.

These practices might also provide entry points to explore varied music extending beyond students' experience or interests. General educators are beginning to demonstrate how one might leverage aspects of participatory culture in formal contexts to design and facilitate learning experiences for young people as a means of exploring subject area content or texts. Kelley et al. (2013) and Reilly, Mehta, and Jenkins (2013), for example, demonstrate the potential of engaging students with texts such as Melville's *Moby Dick* through new media and participatory culture practices such as creative annotation approaches, contributing to related Wikipedia entries, or reinterpreting and

appropriating texts to create new works that add meaning to the original and one's experience with it. Similarly, Clinton, Jenkins, and McWIlliams (2013) describe how responding to existing texts creatively and critically can and ought to co-exist with creating and circulating content. What might similar engagement look and sound like in the context of music teaching and learning?

Informing pedagogy and curriculum

Taking up participatory culture in music teaching and learning contexts calls for focusing on a broader set of skills, knowledge, and understanding that support such engagement than those currently included in many music education settings. Drawing on a foundation of research in fan and media studies, Jenkins et al. (2009) identify a number of skills that are necessary for media education, many of which could prove useful in music teaching and learning contexts. Music educators have an opportunity to contextualise or modify these skills in relation to musical engagement and learning while simultaneously identifying how arts education and more specifically music education might address participatory culture and our potential contributions in this area. This could include: exploring which media skills, such as appropriation, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, play, and others (Jenkins et al. 2009) make the most sense in music teaching and learning settings; determining needed modifications; and identifying music- or arts-specific skills, knowledge, understanding, and dispositions necessary for engaging in aspects of participatory culture at the intersection of music and media.

This type of process is already occurring in media arts education contexts. For instance, Fields, Vasudevan, and Kafai (2015) demonstrate how structuring a classroom into 'nested collectives' of multi-layered interacting groups of increasingly larger size helped address challenges of including the do-it-yourself, collaborative, and cooperative practices of large dispersed online communities in classroom contexts. Kafai and Peppler (2011) articulate competencies for creative media production that 'add the artistic and creative forms that DIY projects take, the critical practices that are often left out of the discussion of youths' DIY efforts, and the ethical considerations in which youth engage' (13). Halverson's (2012) work on designing participatory media spaces highlights the following design principles: the learning environment must be structured for participants to engage in a cycle of conceiving, representing, and sharing a piece of digital art; assessment is intentionally embedded into both the process and the product; digital technologies must play an integral role across the conceiving, representing, and sharing process (245).

This type of work has implications for addressing aspects of participatory culture in relation to music teaching and learning. However, music educators may need to reconcile how to facilitate participatory culture in curricular contexts with long histories of traditions and expectations. How might music educators address a sense of functional fixedness in which one assumes that classes or ensembles must be a certain way and has difficulty imagining any other possibilities? Similar efforts in music education can help music educators negotiate pedagogy and curriculum for situating participatory culture in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts.

We might also consider how aspects of participatory culture can enliven and diversify existing pedagogy and curriculum. In this case, participatory culture practices might inspire expanded ways of facilitating music engagement and learning. This has potential to help those accustomed to a teacher-centred approach make space for increased student decision-making and engagement. For instance, one might expand from directing a rehearsal to improve how students perform music to having students engage in collaborative problem-solving and musical decision-making by crowd sourcing suggestions from within the ensemble or sharing recordings for feedback from larger communities via the Internet (circulation and collaborative problem-solving). Students might also collaborate with others to develop related resources or perhaps an interactive transmedia production designed to involve and interest community members in the music and related ideas such as creating their own expressions related to the music.

Envisioning how participatory culture and related forms of engagement might serve as learning contexts could be a form of creative pedagogy requiring educators to be responsive and attentive to emerging practices, embrace ambiguity in how they might be translated into music teaching and learning contexts, juxtapose seemingly disparate ideas, and embrace multiple intersecting identities of themselves and their students (Abramo and Reynolds 2015). For some, applying or supporting aspects of participatory culture through pedagogy may necessitate reconciling traditions and expectations or functional fixedness in which one assumes that classes or ensembles must be a certain way and have difficulty imagining other possibilities. Those who struggle with functional fixedness might look to the richness of musical engagement in participatory culture and consider how it could occur in their local contexts. This may also help music educators imagine how music programmes can function as nodes in larger networks of learners, educators, and others collaborating and learning from one another. Music educators also ought to consider how goals and foci in relation to participatory culture, musical engagement, learning, and teaching may change in relation to context such as formal, non-formal, or informal settings. We might then reflect on the forms of music engagement afforded or constrained in such contexts and roles of participatory culture and artistic inquiry in relation to how well music programmes foster young people's musical lives.

Perspective Two: mind the gap! Participating in creative music-making in and out of school

It could be argued that in various countries around the world music education is facing vast challenges related to its aims, values, and practices. There even seems to be a contradiction between *ideals* of curriculum and wider sociocultural environment and the *reality* of classrooms. Examinations into current issues in music education through a lens offered by Jenkins et al. (2006) reveal that many of the issues, questions, and concerns have to do with participation: with the very question of who has *access* to artistic expression. As noted elsewhere in this article, the concern over a 'participation gap' (Jenkins and Bertozzi 2008) should be understood in the context of music education as a warning against any educational practices not based on the possibility of participation. On the one hand, both researchers and policy makers are placing an increasingly strong emphasis on participation, creativity, and collaboration in music education. On the other hand, recent studies suggest that in music education institutions, the focus of teaching is still noticeably in individual skill acquisition and reproduction of repertoire and enculturation in existing musical traditions.

In the following, implications are considered that recent sociocultural phenomena – here referred to as manifestations of so-called *participatory culture* (Jenkins et al. 2006a) – might have for institutions of formal music education, particularly the school. The specific focus is on questions concerning the development of pupils' musicianship. I draw from the results of a recently conducted research project in Finland, although the questions discussed are timely in the global field of music education as well. With its reputation of a strong school system (e.g. Sahlberg 2012) and progressive music education programmes (e.g. Randles and Muhonen 2014), the case of Finland, while not without its educational challenges, is treated as a starting point for further discussions and ideas for pragmatic applications in other contexts.

Paths to cosmopolitan musicianship in participatory culture

Several forms of participatory culture welcome and enable people to create their own cultural contents in a variety of ways (e.g. Jenkins et al. 2006; Kann et al. 2007; Schäfer 2011). In music, the recently emerging new media environments, in particular, provide multiple possibilities for people to experience and learn creative music-making, such as songwriting, arranging, remixing, and other forms of composing and improvisation (Partti and Karlsen 2010; Michielse and Partti 2015). As is typical for participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2006), many of the online music communities are

based on collaborative problem-solving, thus enabling musicians with various levels of expertise to work together to complete tasks and generate new knowledge. One's access to cultural production is therefore not restricted by the lack of instrumental training or formal and explicit knowledge of music theory, for instance.

Importantly, opportunities to participate in global music communities have given rise to the ideal of musical versatility and cultural flexibility as an essential part of musicianship (Väkevä 2010; Miller 2012; Partti and Westerlund 2012) – an ideal sometimes referred to with the concept of *cosmopolitan musicianship* (e.g. Partti 2014). According to this view, musicianship looks more like an intricate weaving of different musical roles from the composer and the producer to the performer and the critic, rather than an acquisition of a deep understanding and the 'authentic' expression of a small number of musical practices. The development of such musicianship naturally necessitates opportunities to travel through and between different musical communities, and the freedom to incorporate, sample, blend, manipulate, play with, and share musical elements, ideas, and styles. Consequently, the many forms of creative music-making are seen to constitute the core of musicianship. Creative music-making – or, composing, understood in its widest sense (see Ojala and Väkevä 2013) – is an indispensable means of musical self-expression, taking place through one's active participation in collaborative composing projects and public audio experimentations in participatory culture.

Between ideals and the reality of classrooms

Although communities of participatory culture afford a number of opportunities for creative music-making, people's need for experimenting with music is by no means a novel phenomenon, brought about by new media environments. Creativity has, indeed, been a central concern for both policy writers and researchers in the field of music education already for decades. In Finland, creative music-making was quickly included in the music curriculum on the early days of comprehensive school in the 1970s. Similarly, educational guidelines, from the Tanglewood Declaration in the USA to national and local curricula in various countries, have instructed music educators to include compositional and improvisational processes in school classroom activities. In addition to policy documents, several researchers, from Paynter and Aston (1970) and Webster (1979, 1990) to Burnard (2006) and St. John (2006), to name a few, have diligently pointed out the educational significance of creative music-making. New understandings of musicianship have further impacted in discussions and decisions concerning the focus of teaching at schools and other music education institutions. According to the recently introduced Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014), for instance, creative music-making and composing should *systematically* be included in the music teaching as an important way to support the development of pupils' versatile musicianship, skills of collaboration, and a sense of participation. Despite the policy documents and multiple studies urging the school to provide opportunities for the growth of pupils' musical imagination, creative music-making seems to have a rather *marginal* role in classrooms. Recent studies show, that while Finnish music teachers utilise multiple approaches, methods, and activities covering various musical genres and styles, composing, songwriting, arranging, improvisation, and other forms of creative music-making are only occasionally or rarely a part of music lessons (Muukkonen 2010; Juntunen 2011; Partti 2016). There are several reasons for this. In most cases, music teachers themselves have been enculturated in a music education system with a strong reliance in individual skill acquisition and reproduction of music. As many as four out of five teachers indicated in a recent survey (Partti 2016), that they had not been equipped with adequate pedagogical tools and personal experiences in composing during their own studies, and/or that those skills were out of date due to the absence of in-service training. Teachers hence lacked confidence in teaching creative music-making in their own classrooms. Facilitating group-based composing and collaborative creativity in heterogeneous classrooms were perceived as particularly challenging by respondents of the survey (Partti 2016). The results of the Finnish studies echo the concern voiced in the US context over

'the gap between curriculum mandates … and implementation of creative music-making activities into common practice' (Randles and Muhonen 2014, 2). Although teachers can hardly be blamed for leaning on activities they feel comfortable with, the gap seems to be even wider than the one between the aims of curricula and classroom activities. In fact, pupils' lack of opportunities to participate in creative music-making in school is in stark contrast to the values and ideals of participatory culture; in other words, to the reality of music-making they face outside the school classroom. One could ask, whether we, as a profession, have successfully taught our students to appreciate, admire, analyse, and *consume* music, but failed in equipping them to *create* contents of their own culture with a conviction that 'their contributions matter' (Jenkins et al. 2006, 3).

Bridging the gap

Examining findings of the current research in Finland in the light of wider cultural phenomena brings forth questions, even concerns, regarding the pedagogy of creative music-making. Investigations into music-making practices in participatory culture imply that people are decreasingly interested in consuming ready-made cultural products, and will increasingly engage in creating the contents of their culture by themselves (e.g. Partti and Karlsen 2010; Michielse 2015).

A recent project called *BiisiPumppu* [*SongPump*] offers an example of the efforts aiming to bridge the gap between musical realities where participating in musical cultures as a creator, rather than a consumer only, is regarded as everyone's right and the school classroom with its strong reliance in reproductive activities. The Finnish Composers' Copyright Society (Teosto) initiated project took place in several schools around Finland in 2013–2014 with the goal of equipping teachers to include composing as part of school music classes (for a full report on the project, see Partti and Väkevä, forthcoming). During the project, the music teacher of any given school would collaborate with a professional songwriter/music producer to instruct pupils in how to compose one's own music. Although music-making activities varied from school to school depending on the artists and the pupils' age, the common denominators throughout the project were that all the songs were composed collaboratively, either in small groups or as a whole class, and the teacher-artist teams would adopt a role of a facilitator to help the pupils to get started and to provide feedback and pedagogical support during the course of the composing process.

Through the *BiisiPumppu* project, it was possible for both pupils and teachers to examine composing as a *process* – as a skill that is available for anyone and can be cultivated regardless of one's age, experience and formal knowledge in music. Completing a composition provided a rewarding experience of achievement and motivated to learn more. It also allowed pupils to become aware of, share and further explore their own and their peers' creative ideas.

Also, the *BiisiPumppu* initiative exemplifies how creative music-making can be a means to building bridges both inside the school and between the school and the surrounding community. Integrating songwriting in learning languages, for instance, proved to be a natural way to connect different school subjects. In some schools, pupils wrote and composed a musical, which was performed in a community hall with the help of students of local music and dance schools. Creative music-making activities also resulted in bridging music lessons at school to pupils' own musical worlds by making visible pupils' interests and expertise for instance in technology.

Finally, *BiisiPumppu* shows how creative music-making may enable enquiry-based learning in which the role of adults is to assist pupils in directing their own learning processes (Ojala, forthcoming). Rather than having the starting point in an existing musical repertoire or established music cultures, pupils are encouraged to portray and share their own ideas and views and to listen and react to those of their peers. Composing invites one to play with musical meanings and therefore allows the birth of new repertoire, interpretations and viewpoints (Ojala and Väkevä 2013).

The *BiisiPumppu* project offers an inspiring example of music education practices through which both teachers and pupils are able to face new opportunities for the development of multifaceted and

creative musicianship. As for teachers, working alongside more experienced music makers opened up fresh horizons to be immediately applied in their own teaching, while for pupils, the project afforded access to participation in cultural production. Projects such as *BiisiPumppu* highlight the importance of encouraging and equipping teachers to begin experimenting with creative music-making in their classrooms. Bringing teachers together with each other and, for instance, with local musicians to share their experiences, ideas, and good practices is crucial. Moreover, there needs to be a long-term plan in place for the development of music teacher education, including teachers' in-service training with an aim of providing teachers with opportunities to cultivate an experimental attitude toward music (Partti 2016). Building a fully participatory music education system calls for institutions and practices that support the growth of students' multifaceted and creative musicianship by enabling everyone's access to opportunities, experiences, skills and knowledge related to creative music-making.

Perspective Three: Irish traditional music and participatory culture

Background

While it began over 300 years ago as a local participatory music-making tradition, Irish traditional dance music (IrTrad) is now firmly established as a global participatory culture phenomenon. This transformation of IrTrad from a 'local' folk music to a 'glocal' one has happened relatively recently and fairly quickly.

Many sizable Irish diasporas came to exist throughout the English-speaking world as a result of the large-scale flood of Irish emigration in the nineteenth century. Although many Irish diasporic communities did – and still do – retain a strong sense of cultural identity, IrTrad as an active music practice gradually diminished in most Irish diasporas over time (Vallely 1999). However, sparked by the burgeoning folk revival movement of the 1960s, interest in playing IrTrad began to re-emerge both in and outside of the Irish diaspora for several reasons.

First, the rise of 'Riverdance' as a worldwide cultural phenomenon in 1994 popularised the genre of IrTrad to a general non-Irish audience (Vallely 1999). Its timing could not have been better in terms of introducing the genre to a widespread public; the arrival of 'Riverdance' and its quick insertion into the public *zietgiest* coincided with the rise of and easy availability and accessibility to the Internet. Although commercial recordings of IrTrad have been around since the 1920s, and those (along with radio) have served to spread IrTrad from its geographical Irish base, neither recordings nor radio have had the global impact that the Internet has had for IrTrad and would-be IrTrad players alike (Waldron and Veblen 2008; Cawley 2013).

In addition to promoting IrTrad globally, more important – at least to IrTrad musicians regardless of their skill and/or ability levels – are the many IrTrad sites dedicated to learning music in the genre, a significant part of which includes users being able to access, make, and share user-generated content (Cawley 2013; Waldron 2013). Further, the emergence of second generation voice over Internet protocol technologies (VOIP) like Skype and Google Hangout enable learners from around the world to take lessons from professional IrTrad musicians based in Ireland – something I am currently doing. IrTrad can thus be considered a participatory music-making genre that is also a participatory culture in both on and offline contexts (after Jenkins 2006a).

Second, both 'Riverdance' and the introduction of the Web into the general population further coincided with an emergence of what Turino (2008) suggests is the longing of people in so-called 'developed' societies to re-connect to their cultural roots, be they real or imagined. Although Turino focuses on the relatively sudden re-emergence and revival of Old Time music and dance in North American society, I contend that his arguments regarding the renewed popularity of Old Time music also explain both the global appeal of IrTrad for people with no obvious Irish cultural connections, and its 'revival' for those living in traditional Irish diasporic contexts.

The IrTrad session

IrTrad music's primary 'space' of participatory music-making occurs in the *session* or *session ceol* (Cowdery 1991). According to Cowdery:

> In Irish traditional music, contextual musical induction occurs in the *sessiun ceoil* (or session). Musicians gather together in an informal setting to play music together and this gathering can occur in any agreed upon public or private space. The session exists for the enjoyment of the players, some of whom attend the session to test their own abilities against that of other musicians, while others come to learn new tunes and techniques. No formal teaching, however, takes place. (1991, 9)

To the uninitiated, it can appear that sessions are a democratic way of making music; however, in most cases, they are not – and knowing this is an important part of 'belonging' in the participatory culture of IrTrad. Although basic session etiquette is understood by those already familiar with IrTrad as a practice, etiquette does vary from session to session, depending on a number of variables such as the participants present (and the personalities, musical knowledge, and skill level in the genre of the same), the geographical location, and the level type of the session in question (Foy 2009). Sessions are often designated as 'slow' or 'fast', but are sometimes understood by participants to be 'in-between' depending upon who is in attendance. 'Slow sessions' are generally understood as being a place for beginners to play with others and can also serve a useful function for more advanced players who want to 'pick up' tunes;'fast' sessions are for more advanced and/or semi-professional and professional players. Sometimes there is a paid session leader (or two) whose job is to maintain the musical momentum in the session and to ensure that all of the session players are enjoying themselves musically and that the session runs smoothly. There are many more variables that contribute to the subtleties of each individual session's 'feel' but a discussion of that is beyond the scope of this paper.

IrTrad as 'participatory culture'

'Participatory culture', in Jenkins' (2006a) definition of the term, has added an online twenty-first century global twist to what was once a primarily Irish and Irish diasporic tradition. Numerous websites – tradconnect.com, thesession.org, chiff and fipple.com – exist that allow IrTrad musicians to locate other IrTrad musicians and sessions globally (Cawley 2013). However, it is also a two way street – people post their locations and sessions so that other IrTrad musicians may find them as well.

Sessions can now easily be found in cities throughout the Western world, along with other unexpected places such as Tokyo, Istanbul, and Dubai. Many session participants are musical enthusiasts who have little or no cultural ties to Ireland; they are simply people who are drawn to learn and play IrTrad music in a participatory music-making culture as exemplified by the IrTrad session (Waldron and Veblen 2008; Cawley 2013).

The websites above also supply learners with copious resources and contacts to IrTrad online communities and 'schools' – and, perhaps most importantly from a participatory culture perspective, they allow people to upload and share newly written/composed tunes – i.e. user-generated content. Posters can – and often do – ask for feedback and suggestions on their own newly composed 'pieces' (Cawley 2013; Waldron 2013). These tunes can then spread globally very quickly, thus further expanding the canon of IrTrad music in the style of the genre based on established IrTrad performance practices and canon (www.thesession.org). Like IrTrad offline sessions, to the uninitiated, online IrTrad forums appear to be 'democratic' in nature – anyone can post as long as he/she has joined the forum – but how posts are treated and responded to are very much dependent upon board members' perception or personal knowledge of the person doing the posting. From this standpoint, IrTrad forums operate no differently than any other topic-specific internet bulletin board (Johnston in Hunsinger and Senft 2014).

Regardless of location and the other variances already discussed, IrTrad sessions do share commonalities throughout the global participatory culture of IrTrad music. First, there is a 'standard' core repertoire as discussed earlier. Although the canon has always evolved – new tunes are continually being added while others fall from popularity – it is a 'living tradition' with a common repertoire at its centre (Vallely 1999). Second, learning what the appropriate session etiquette is and then displaying knowledge of the same in sessions is key to IrTrad's participatory culture, as already discussed. And last, an understanding that, in order to become proficient and accepted as an IrTrad musician, would-be players are required to learn the music in the appropriate modes of music learning associated with IrTrad – that is, aural/oral music learning, supplemented with observational learning. For novices living outside of a geographical or diasporic context who are only familiar with learning modes consistent with Western art music (i.e. visually, using Western notation), this is most often the biggest challenge to overcome in order to become proficient in the participatory culture of IrTrad.

Conclusion

Once a local folk music bound by geography, IrTrad music is now situated globally in a diverse number of offline and online contexts and communities. Although it began as a participatory music-making genre 300 years ago in rural Ireland, the centrality of participatory music-making in the practice of IrTrad has remained consistent despite time, distance, and global locality. IrTrad has always contained elements of participatory culture, but easy accessibility to the Internet – with all of the resources it has to offer – has firmly established IrTrad as a twenty-first century globally situated on and offline participatory culture phenomenon.

The appeal of learning musics like IrTrad (as well as other 'alternative' musics) has implications for music learning and teaching that are connected to many of the same issues that we as a field have debated for some time now. Although not directly applicable to formal classroom music teaching, it does offer lessons for us as an example of one alternative mode of music learning and teaching other than the 'traditional' school music/conservatory (i.e. Western) model. This factor alone warrants reflection and consideration on the part of music educators.

Perspective Four: a philosophical perspective: the participation problem

> The enormous interest by working class high school and college youth in learning how to play guitar, drums, and other musical instruments indigenous to rock music expresses the yearning for participation rather than spectatorship, and the desire for activity that is truly independent of institutional life. (Aronowitz 1973, 83)

The first three perspectives in this article discuss possible implications of Jenkins's concept of participatory culture for the field of music education. Perspective One advocates for broadening and expanding conceptions of music education, Perspective Two emphasises how participatory culture might increase the amount of 'creative music-making' that occurs in school music if teachers were willing and better equipped to capitalise on it, and Perspective Three demonstrates how the global spread and expansion of IrTrad represents a form of participatory culture that involves non-institutionalised learning and teaching. In this final, 'philosophical', perspective I offer thoughts on how the concept of participatory culture provides an opportunity to consider ways in which we as music educators are fulfilling two of our espoused professional aims and purposes of music education: access and inclusion, and lifelong impact.

Participatory culture and the highly qualified music teacher

Universal access and inclusion has long been a celebrated value of music educators. The landing page of the website for the International Society for Music Education, for example, proclaims,

'Supporting and promoting music education and music making for all', a line echoing the mid-twentieth century slogan of the National Association for Music Education in the USA: 'Music for every child; every child for music'. By emphasising 'relatively low barriers to artistic expression' and 'informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices', Jenkins may be read as suggesting that participatory culture represents the egalitarian inclusion and empowerment of cultural democracy (Trend 1997; Graves 2005; Holden 2008) over the exclusionary tastes, standards, and expertise of democratisation of culture. A 'participation gap' is no doubt an issue worthy of attention by music educators sincere in the belief that music education should exist for all people. When music education practices lead to exclusion and exclusiveness (usually under the guise of standards central to capital 'c' Culture), espoused values ring hollow.

It is unclear to me, however, where participatory culture leaves the music educator, at least when understood as a school teacher whose role is usually defined according to licensing practices, and defended by professional organisations, on the grounds of being 'highly qualified'. While low barriers to artistic expression may be a laudable starting point, schooling usually entails an expectation of some sort of growth or development, something that implies, for example, a 15-year-old should be able to do certain things that a five-year-old cannot yet do (i.e. *improvement*). If improvement is sufficiently achievable through informal mentorship, the value and necessity of being highly qualified is rendered moot. If informal mentorship is all that is required, perhaps the most efficient schooling solution is to hire the least expensive supervisor one can find and simply let students have at it.

It may be, of course, that the definition of a music educator as highly qualified requires recalibration, if not outright reconstitution. Highly qualified might mean someone well-versed in promoting informal mentorship in vernacular musics, for example. On the other hand, does the emphasis on grassroots, vernacular 'out of school' culture not sell short the value of learning things in school that might not otherwise be encountered? Do music educators not have an obligation to introduce new skills, concepts, ideas, and *musics* into the cultural worlds of students? In this spirit, how do music educators understand the role and meaning of being 'culture workers' (Lines 2003)? Does participatory culture advance an understanding of music education that potentially forecloses learning possibilities by reducing music learning and teaching to the lowest common denominator of mass appeal? By his own admission, 'music is pretty much a blind spot' for Jenkins (personal communication), and it should not be lost on music educators that the 'unit of analysis' for Jenkins is media literacy, not music and art production or learning per se. While cases can be made for the importance of media literacy in education in a media-saturated world, is it a foregone conclusion that such a task logically falls under the purview of music educators?

None of this is to dismiss the value of literacy – or better yet, from my perspective, *fluency* (Gouzouasis 2005). Leaving things to chance – to the whims of nature and informal mentoring – is probably as likely to widen participation gaps as to reduce them. Participation requires opportunity and agency, the latter understood here as the capacity to act in a given context and situation. Leaving things to chance tends to benefit those already possessing the capacity to act. We have compulsory schooling in order to, among other things, provide a safety net to ensure that opportunity and agency are not the sole province of the already privileged. As rightly pointed out in Perspective Three, IrTrad has become a global practice and veritable internet community. Given requisite levels of technological and cultural capital, it is possible that students not familiar with IrTrad might stumble upon it by happenstance, perhaps regarding it as one of many fascinating curiosities to be found on the internet. A good music educator, however, would help to ensure not only that *all* students (regardless of pre-existing social and cultural capital) were aware of IrTrad, but also that they had, at a minimum, the basic skills and knowledge (i.e. fluency) to act on any musical desires they might have – helping to ensure what Wright (2010) calls, 'The right to perceive musical participation as possible in the future' (277).

In and out, now and then

A seemingly perennial issue for music educators is the connection that does or does not exist between formal instruction in music and participation beyond and outside of it. If participation as producer rather than consumer is a desired aim, then music instruction should ideally lead to an increase in out-of-school and future music activity (Regelski 2007). Some researchers, however, have pointed to a perceived disconnect between the nature of music studied in school and what students apparently desire to learn or participate in outside of school (Lamont et al. 2003; Campbell, Connell, and Beegle 2007; Ho 2014). Others have critiqued what is perceived as a focus on skills that have little utility beyond the school years (Regelski 2005; Myers 2008; Jones 2009). In either case, there are aspersions cast upon current school music teaching practices, the implication being that if only music teaching were better or different then music would appeal to more people and more people would actively engage throughout the lifespan.

Although criticisms of school music practices are not of one piece, it does give one pause to consider that critique seems to occur in so many countries throughout the world, regardless of the form of instruction – classically focussed or 'popular'. While I am sympathetic to many of the ideas proposed in Perspectives One and Two, I worry that the conceptual promise of participatory culture may prove illusory when subjected to institutional norms and expectations. As expressed by Stanley Aronowitz at the outset of this perspective, there is likely always going to be a desire on the part of some people to engage in activities and practices not colonised by educational institutions. Aronowitz would no doubt be surprised to witness music classes in many Nordic countries, where popular music instruction is commonplace. He would probably not be surprised to learn that it is not the imagined panacea (Lindgren and Ericsson 2010).

Engagement beyond the school years is a related but slightly different problem. As I have argued elsewhere (Mantie 2015), the issue here speaks to how the learning and teaching of music are conceptualised. When music is viewed primarily (if not strictly) as a school 'subject', learning will fail to reflect what Lave and Wenger (1991) call *legitimate peripheral participation*, i.e. it fails to be understood as part of a real world practice. Leisure studies scholar Douglas Kleiber states this problem in straight-forward terms:

> The knowledge base developed in schools … [provides] a strong foundation for learning activities outside of the school; but children all too often leave such interests at the schoolroom door. Most schools use an elaborate system of extrinsic motivation, primarily in the form of grades, to ensure the development of the knowledge and skills necessary for continuing on in school, for participation in the work force, and for contributing to society. But this process often undermines the intrinsic interest that children bring to learning in the same way that prizes, and other rewards, and emphasis on winning sometimes take the fun out of children's games and sports. (1999, 43)

One does not learn to sing or play in school for its intrinsic joy, in other words, but in order to earn a grade or credit. Introducing or incorporating participatory culture is unlikely to change this.

The 'applied sociomusicologist', Charles Keil, had a passion for promoting musical participation, which he summed up with his wonderful phrase 'born to groove' (http://www.borntogroove.com). Keil's writings suggest that many of the world's problems would be solved if we could just get more people singing, drumming, and dancing. In his self-published newsletters he would print the following questions:

> How can we get more participatory practices into our own lives and the lives of those around us? What problems are we solving (or stumbling over) in making live music, life-affirming music? What problems are we solving in assisting children toward fully expressive lives? How can we further empower all people musically?[1]

As a staunch critic of electronics and mediated musics, Keil would likely be horrified by participatory culture. To the extent to which music educators embrace the spirit of Keil's central questions, however, the underlying ethos of participatory culture may provide insights necessary for music education to better enact the espoused values of access, inclusion, and lifelong impact.

Final thoughts

Arguably, the term participatory culture is in danger of becoming cliché and watered down as it becomes commonplace. Attending to its origins, however, we are reminded of the salience of concepts such as expressions, circulations, affiliations, and collaborative problem-solving, and what these might mean for expanding musical practices, providing entry points for artistic inquiry, and enlivening pedagogy and curriculum in music education (Perspective One). We are also reminded of the importance schools might play for ensuring access to artistic expression (Perspectives Two and Four) in a global era of cosmopolitan musicianship and diasporic musical communities (Perspectives Two and Three) and learning over the Internet (Perspective Three). Importantly, participatory culture raises issues of what it means to be a highly qualified teacher and the role universal education might play in mitigating differential access in a digital world (Perspective Four).

Music education scholars have a long history of drawing extensively on literature from other fields, most notably philosophy, sociology, psychology, and education. The four perspectives presented in this paper have attempted to illustrate how Henry Jenkins's theory of participatory culture can help advance thinking in music learning and teaching by reflecting on our received practices in light of an ever-changing world. As we move into an increasingly technologically mediated global era, participatory culture operates as one of many useful frameworks for understanding and reimagining music education practices in and across a multitude of diverse settings and contexts.

Note

1. Keil's self-published newsletters from which these questions are taken were called the M.U.S.E. Letter.

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Notes on contributors

Dr Janice Waldron is an Associate Professor of Music Education at the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Roger Mantie is Associate Professor at Arizona State University. His work emphasises connections between schooling and society, with a focus on lifelong engagement in and with music and the arts. He is co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Music Making and Leisure* and the *Oxford Handbook of Technology and Music Education*.

Heidi Partti works as Acting Professor at the Faculty of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music at Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki in Finland. She has widely published on topics such as music-related learning communities, digital technology, peer learning, collective creativity, and the development of intercultural competencies in music teacher education. She is also a coauthor of *Säveltäjyyden jäljillä*, a book on composing pedagogy. Heidi's website is http://www.heidipartti.com/ and she tweets @heidipartti.

Evan S. Tobias is Associate Professor at Arizona State University where he heads the Consortium for Innovation and Transformation in Music Education (CITME) http://citme.asu.edu and is Director of the Kax Herberger Center for Design, the Arts, and Young People. Evan's website is http://evantobias.net and he tweets @etobias_musiced.

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