Bridging the Interval: Teaching Global Awareness through Music and Politics

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Abstract: Inquiry in Global Studies: Music and Politics is a regular course offering in which first-year honors students examine the social and cultural import of music in a global context. This qualitative study examines the practical and pedagogical implications of teaching music and politics during the coronavirus crisis. In a thematic, five-part series analyzing non-Western music both in service to the government and as protest against it, the author describes how students perceived the commonalities and diversities in global culture, history, politics, and society through music while at the same time demonstrating growth in music-making processes and confronting a remote learning paradigm. In a curriculum spanning North Korea, China, Russia, Cuba, and Iran, the author considers the impact of music instruction in cultivating an understanding of transnational community. The paper concludes with selections from the final student showcase and a review of learning outcomes, prompting honors practitioners to consider how high-impact practices in the arts can empower students, cultivate community, and give rise to new multicultural competencies. Changes driven by COVID-19 (course content, delivery, and assessment measures) are presented.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic—teaching and learning; music education; global studies; protest songs; Ball State University (IN)—Honors College

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INTRODUCTION

> It's not those who write the laws that have the greatest impact on society. It's those who write the songs.
>
> —Blaise Pascal, 1640

Perhaps at no other time in recent history have circumstances been so ripe for fostering a social and cultural understanding of music and global citizenship in the honors classroom. Spurred by the extraordinary events of 2020, educators across the globe abruptly shifted gears mid-semester—migrating to remote platforms, modifying curricula, and mitigating the effects of uncertainty and social isolation for their students—in efforts to maintain a sense of constancy and cohesion amid a global crisis. At the same time, musicians and aficionados flocked to social media for communal expression and support. Applications such as TikTok and Soundtrap made it possible for people of all ages, origins, and aptitudes to come together as a community. As the coronavirus spread across manmade borders and national boundaries, new ideas about geopolitical barriers and transnational perspectives surfaced too, prompting honors practitioners to consider again how high-impact practices in the arts can empower students, cultivate community, and give rise to new multicultural competencies (*NCHC20,* 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us that our geographies cannot protect us from a ubiquitous enemy. As concepts such as cultural awareness, acceptance, and appreciation for the "other" gained momentum in everyday life, I (like many of my colleagues) began to revisit certain curricular objectives relating to global study. With this crisis came an opportunity for teachers to transgress the everyday boundaries that previously defined us and for students to come together in novel ways to begin to pave the way into a new world.

As people across the globe began uniting in prayer, hope, and action against an ever-changing viral threat to humanity (Guterres, 2020), educators in nearly every country jumped into virtual classrooms and skillfully adapted their knowledge and experience to advance online learning imperatives. Teaching methodologies in honors education received new meaning and significance, too. Our mission to prepare students to think critically, lead compassionately, and question fervently came to the fore. Some courses and teaching strategies seemed more relevant than others in this context, prompting a rethinking of purpose and design.

While our job is to inform our students, we also sensed, intellectually and viscerally, how world events affected the way our students received information and made meaning for themselves. Issues relating to geographic, religious,

and cultural diversity are more immediate now, so teaching our students what happens in corners of the world beyond their backyards is essential. As social and political events of early 2021 in America attracted international attention, educators sought to develop student awareness and appreciation for the fragility of democracy, which, coupled with a global health crisis, emphasized just how significant the interdisciplinary study of political, economic, legal, ecological, and cultural interconnectedness is. Topics that confront issues relating to national and international conflict, awareness, and accord now hold greater significance in honors curricula and pedagogy. In this context, my global studies curriculum was focused through the lens of music and politics while also meeting the challenges of orienting students during the coronavirus pandemic, providing them with research and performing opportunities in the classroom and beyond.

INQUIRY IN GLOBAL STUDIES: MUSIC AND POLITICS

The first-year course Inquiry in Global Studies: Music and Politics was born in response to an impassioned call nearly a decade ago by Dutch scholar Marca V. C. Wolfensberger. Recognizing a crucial and timely need to present honors students with opportunities for global study and intercultural exchange, Wolfensberger urged honors educators to consider offerings that instill a sense of global citizenship and authentic learning:

> Honors programs . . . offer educational opportunities for talented, motivated students; we thus have a special responsibility to inspire these students to respect other disciplines, cultures, and nationalities through genuine conversations, interactive learning, and international exchange. Our aim must be to enhance, not compromise, human difference and dignity. (Wolfensberger, 2012, p. 279)

Introducing students to such topics at the beginning of their honors study is especially important. Such encounters with foreign ideas and difference allow for what program director and professor Kristine A. Miller describes as "painstaking curiosity":

> Honors students embody every facet of this definition: they are curious curiosities with minds both careful and eager, who therefore need encouragement and guidance as they take intellectual risks on the path to lifelong learning. (Miller, 2019, p. 64)

A curriculum that seeks to raise awareness of current global events while acknowledging difference is crucial to fostering intellectual growth and agility in these students. By troubling them, we spark their curiosity to look further out and deeper in, catalyzing change within and without.

Ideas about enhancing human difference and dignity had become a particular focus of honors educators just before COVID. The 2018 national conference, *Learning to Transgress* (NCHC, 2018), focused on transgressional transformations in teaching and urged educators to adopt the same critical discourses and outside-the-box methods that we wholeheartedly encourage for our students, helping us meet mental, technical, and physical challenges where they were with fresh ink in our pens and empathetic smiles shining out at our students. Shortly thereafter, in the fall of 2019, I introduced my course on global studies. Then, to meet the extraordinary challenges of the coronavirus crisis head-on, I adapted the course for remote delivery to first-semester freshmen in 2020, adjusting the curriculum, pedagogical approach and insights, teaching methods and remote adaptations, student perceptions, and learning outcomes at a time of heightened awareness about our collective, transnational humanity.

CURRICULAR OBJECTIVES

The 100-level course Inquiry in Global Studies: Music and Politics introduces the ways that music intertwines with governments and social movements around the world. First-year, first-semester students consider the relationship between music and humanity in ways that transcend place and time. In response to COVID, I modified the course content and assessments, while also adapting the musical themes and their attendant global complexities, to foster exchange and understanding among the students in relation to our current circumstances. The scope of the course is complex and not an easy task during this emotionally charged time, thus provoking students in several ways. They met with subjects foreign and remote to their upbringing, and they confronted history and human expression across the map: music sung in different tongues, conceived and performed under varying governmental rule, and serving as testimony to everyday existence for people all over the world. This global inquiry was an opportunity for students to understand and evaluate how people live in other countries, how social classes are formed, and how religions are organized in regions they likely did not know existed nor care about during a time of personal challenge and national crisis. While students of this introductory course were preoccupied with tackling

adjustments to college life uncharacteristic of a normal first semester at the university, they were also tasked with meeting course requirements, standards in academic writing, due dates, a host of readings and assignments, a theme meant to introduce and agitate, and a foreign-born instructor as well.

CONTENT

Inquiry in Global Studies: Music and Politics explores the commonalities and diversities in global culture, history, politics, and society through music. Honors students typically enroll in their first year. Throughout the semester, they become acquainted with topics from non-European, non-North American regions and peoples. Students explore the relationship between two concepts, music and politics, and the ways that these interplay throughout social and political movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Scholars studying the effects of interdisciplinary music education in fields such as sociology and political science note that music appreciation and analyses can bring emotional and educational value to people worldwide and that teachers at any level, particularly undergraduate honors, can teach students about diverse culture and justice-related concepts through music while promoting critical thinking, civic knowledge, and social understanding (Levy and Byrd, 2011, pp. 64–75). In my opinion, this benefit of music appreciation especially applies to my undergraduate honors course, where students can learn about diverse cultural and justice-related concepts through music while promoting critical thinking, civic knowledge, and social understanding.

While I believe that teaching honors students about music and politics can be a powerful approach to creating awareness and cultivating understanding, it presents challenges. Many contemporary American undergraduates are living in a democracy without fully understanding the vulnerabilities of a democratic system. Many are unfamiliar or ill-informed about atrocities that have taken, or are currently taking, place in the world; most of them were born decades after the great historical injustices presented in class. Furthermore, many students have little or no musical background and often find the type of music featured in the course to be in stark contrast to the music they listen to regularly. Despite these challenges, teaching inquiry into global studies through music provides possibilities for engagement in subjects that students might otherwise forego. The course's five main thematic components are:

- North Korea: Music in service to the government
- China: Song and censorship during the Cultural Revolution

- Russia: Education and protest from the Soviet Era to Putin
- Cuba: Diasporas, drums, and dance
- Iran: Pre- and Post-Revolution

The central questions students met throughout the semester of fall 2020 were aligned with scholar John Street's systematic untangling of music's political power:

1. What kind of effect does music have on social and political developments around the world?
2. What kind of power do governments utilize to control their people?

Such questions (Street, 2012) invited honors students to break out of the familiar and comfortable knowledge of their own music, culture, and textbook understanding of historical and political events. Through musical composition and testimony, some students, perhaps for the first time in their lives, began to experience in mind and body what it means for people in other countries to live in a totalitarian regime, unstable government, or disruptive society. By experiencing various types of musical expressions in marginalized communities and by incorporating new ways of listening and observing, some students began to reevaluate their identities as American, young, and free. By the semester's end, students demonstrated an awareness of different cultures, societies, and political environments around the world. They exercised skills in listening and sound reasoning to analyze social issues and developed an ability to analyze cross-cultural and non-western political events and how music shaped them. They worked together and independently to develop knowledge of the non-Western world and learn to incorporate knowledge from a variety of sources to develop new insights into the interdependence between different countries and power centers.

CONTEXT

Among the rich and varied sequences of global studies offered at the Ball State University Honors College, students generally gravitate to the subject of music and politics because they enjoy discussing politics and have a passion for music and music-making, yet because by design the study involves musical expressions and experiences in foreign nations, they sometimes find listening to music in the context of social movements or protest hard to take in. The pervasive sense of fear, anger, and misinformation is sometimes too

close for comfort. In the fall of 2020, attempting to introduce an appreciation for the foreign and to consider music's political origins in turmoil and distrust while our first-year students grappled with COVID-related sickness, hardship, and death as well as looming socio-political tensions seemed quite a big task. Therefore, I felt that we had first to explore these themes in the context of home before moving abroad in place and time.

The fall 2020 semester began amid a series of national crises: a health pandemic, social injustices and protest, wildfires in California, and an equally fiery presidential race. Thus, we began with a rather spirited discussion on conflict and harmony in music and politics, broaching topics of upcoming elections, protest songs, and political music throughout American history in the context of Rex Thomson's thoughtful commentary on their intertwined relationship (2016). Considering American democracy, its peril, and a "we're all in this together" refrain (Mettler, 2020), I presented readings about the role of music throughout world history. Adopting the Canvas platform, students opened up about the role of music in their own lives as they chronicled intimate moments and musical pieces in their young lives. Our Zoom sessions were devoted to listening to, discussing, and analyzing together songs such as "Yankee Doodle" and "John Brown's Body"; Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit"; Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" in relation to "God Bless America"; Bob Dylan's "The Times, They are A-Changin'"; Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" and Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On"; and contemporary music by NWA, Kendrick Lamar, and Milck. These songs, in the context of evolving, persistent protest in America, opened the door for students to begin looking at music as a means for voicing opinion and to experience it as empowering and agitating rather than soothing. Once we addressed this line of discourse, it was time to look beyond our borders.

Our first step into the music-related political discussion of foreign countries involved reflection on the ways that societies around the world used music during the beginnings of COVID-induced lockdowns. The first phenomenon we discussed was spontaneous balcony concerts. From Italy to Iraq, people sheltering in place left their living spaces to join neighbors outside in song and musical performances. Together we considered how music unifies people during good times and bad. We read about pop-up concerts in India, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Lebanon, Panama, Turkey, Iraq, and more (Taylor, 2020).

To augment this discussion, I created the assignment "Reflecting on COVID-19, Globalism and Music made for People," which tasked students with viewing Global Citizen's streaming concert, *One World: Together at*

Home. Curated by musical artist Lady Gaga, this six-hour event, which benefited the World Health Organization's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, featured nearly seventy musical performances from artists around the world (World Health Organization, 2020). Students selected three musicians and reflected on their performance and unique contributions to the program. Together we explored the extent to which this event might be considered political by referring to reports that the concert raised $127m for pandemic relief (Beaumont-Thomas, 2020) and that millions of people, despite widespread geography and restrictions in mobility, came together in a simple act of collective listening and mutual support.

The following week was devoted to examining types of government and the meaning of national anthems.

1. Forms of Government

   This session remediated student knowledge and introduced new concepts related to forms of government across the globe. The class ($n = 24$) was divided into 9 groups via Zoom's breakout rooms, one group for each type of government. Working in Google Docs, the groups explored a shared form based on information provided in the study brief "10 Common Forms of Government" (Thompson, 2021). For each type of government, students also received additional links to relevant reading resources. Group members chose to explore one of the following types of government from the list below. After thirty minutes, the class reconvened to present what they had learned. These groups focused on:

   a. oligarchy in South Africa
   b. dictatorship in Thailand
   c. theocracy in Iran
   d. kleptocracy in Russia
   e. anarchy in Somalia
   f. monarchy in Saudi Arabia
   g. communism in Cuba and China
   h. tribalism in Afghanistan
   i. totalitarianism in North Korea

2. National Anthems as National Symbols

   This session explored the concept of "anthem" as a means to express individual and national identity. Students read and discussed Courtney Brown's "National Anthems and Pseudo Anthems" (2007) and listened to a variety of anthems charged with controversies and debate (Mexican, Kazakh, and Vietnamese). We culminated the session by coming home to controversial aspects of "The Star-Spangled Banner" (Morley and Schwarz, 2016).

After that week, we came to the heart of it all: music and politics around the world. Our early conditioning sessions challenged students in small steps and helped pave the way into a broader perspective.

THEMATIC SERIES

The thematic series focuses on themes of authority, control, protest, and community but with each installment centering on completely different people being affected by completely different circumstances.

North Korea: Music in Service to the Government

North Korea is considered the most secretive country in the world, so studying the music and politics in this country is challenging. Lack of timely, adequate information about current events is problematic, yet evidence of the state of music in this country is plentiful and available through various news outlets, movies, research projects, and YouTube recordings. We consulted a wealth of literature, both scholarly and popular, as well as documentaries and primary video recordings. To get acquainted with the country and its regime, society, and music, students explored a comprehensive country profile (British Broadcasting Company, 2020) and then delved into its music through several literatures. In the remote classroom, we explored different types of North Korean music.

Opera

"Where Are You, Dear General?" Originally an aria from the revolutionary opera *True Daughter of the Party*, excerpts from this aria in the form of an eerie wake-up melody are played through loudspeakers across the metropolis of Pyongyang. The opera refers to Kim Il-Sung and credits Kim Jong-Il as the composer. At the beginning of each new day, North Koreans hear this

tune glorifying the Supreme Leader and inspired by operas written during China's Cultural Revolution. This aria is one example of many other forms of music produced with strong support of the North Korean government, songs that glorify and worship the leaders of the country. As librarian Ray Heigemeir points out, the North Korean government uses music as a means of propaganda:

> Pyongyang University of Music and Dance, founded in 1972, is North Korea's only school of music, and continues to foster a strict adherence to the *juche* political ideology, promoting self-reliance and absolute commitment to the Party. All artistic production belongs to the masses; music glorifies sacrifice to the Party and its 'Dear Leader' or celebrates good communal fortune such as a bountiful harvest. (Heigemeir, 2018)

Pop

Popular music inspired by the West and South Korea speaks to younger audiences through westernized clothing, staging styles, and electronic instrumentation. Yet, as Heigemeir points out, it is devoid of individual expression or flair:

> simple harmonies and diatonic melodies retain a mere hint of the flavor of Korean folk music traditions. Contemporary recordings evidence liberal use of synthesizers and other electronics, and Western instruments such as electric guitars and drum kits. The lack of any singular creative voice is apparent in the blandness of the musical product, and a certain Lawrence-Welk wholesomeness permeates. (Heigemeir, 2018)

For their assignment on North Korea, students were asked to watch one of the following films:

1. *My Brothers and Sisters in the North* (Cho, 2016)
2. *The Red Chapel (Det Røde Kapel)* (Brügger, 2009)
3. *Dear Pyongyang* (Yang, 2005)
4. *A State of Mind* (Gordon, Bonner, and Battsek, 2004)
5. *Secret State of North Korea* (Jones, 2017)

They were also introduced to a variety of articles and interviews, including "Poems for Kim," an interview with the regime's former favorite poet

(Jin-sung), and "North Korea defectors: Meet young people who have fled from North to South Korea," a gripping investigation into the lives of young people (BBC, 2019). Next, the students were asked to choose a musical artist, composition, or band from the variety of sources presented in-class or those discovered on their own and to explore the musical style, qualities, and lyrics (if applicable). They were asked to consider the potential power of the music, including its effects on North Korean society, and to identify elements common to and disparate from music in the United States. As part of their written assignment, students examined the degrees of influence that music held for maintaining social or cultural unity. Students also completed a bit of work related to geography and demography: identifying the distance to North Korea, its number of residents, and military capacities relative to the United States. To this end, they consulted general reference sources, military strength ratings, and councils on foreign relations.

China: Song and Censorship during the Cultural Revolution

At the heart of our discussion on music in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), students read, listened to, reflected on, and discussed a selection of children's songs composed during that time and appearing in Lei Ouyang Bryant's "'Tiny Little Screw Cap': Children's Songs from the Chinese Cultural Revolution" (2018): songs aimed at educating young children in the doctrine of Mao Zedong. Bryant's examination of songs of praise, political activities, children's activities, international diplomatic relations and cross-Strait relations, and all ethnicities led us to focus on three songs: "Tiny Little Screw Cap," "I Love Beijing's Tiananmen," and "Study Well and Make Progress Every Day." Students augmented their experience of the songs with readings about the reign of "The People's Leader" and his series of little red books, which—like the songs—were designed to instill in children an unquestionable commitment to their country and the political party. Other songs we considered in class were "Grow Up to be a Good Member of the Commune" and "Grow Up to be a New Peasant," which emphasized to China's youth the place in socialist society that awaited them in their future (Bryant, 2018).

As part of our remote learning paradigm, I created an introductory interactive group activity in Zoom titled "Primary Sources: Stories in Pictures, Chinese Cultural Revolution" and containing images of politically charged events in the lives of Chinese youth and teachers during the Cultural Revolution (Chen, 2013). Some of these were photographed by Li Zhensheng, a

Chinese photojournalist admired and remembered for capturing the most iconic pictures of that time (Figure 1). Other images, such as an elementary school textbook cover illustration of children dressed as Red Guards and holding little red books of quotations from Mao Zedong, proved evocative to students (Figure 2). For this project, students were divided among random breakout rooms where they accessed a Google Doc link that led to the encapsulated images. In this breakout session, students addressed the following topics:

1. What is happening in the photograph/image?
2. Describe the activities you see in the image.
3. List all objects in the picture.
4. What kind of clothing is worn?
5. Are there any letterings on signs or buildings?
6. What time of day is the picture taken?
7. If people are featured in the photograph, what do you think their relationship is to one another?

Figure 1. Heilongjiang province governor Li Fanwu under brutal attack by young Red Guards in 1966. They shaved his hair and forced him to bow for hours.

8. What does this photograph suggest to you?

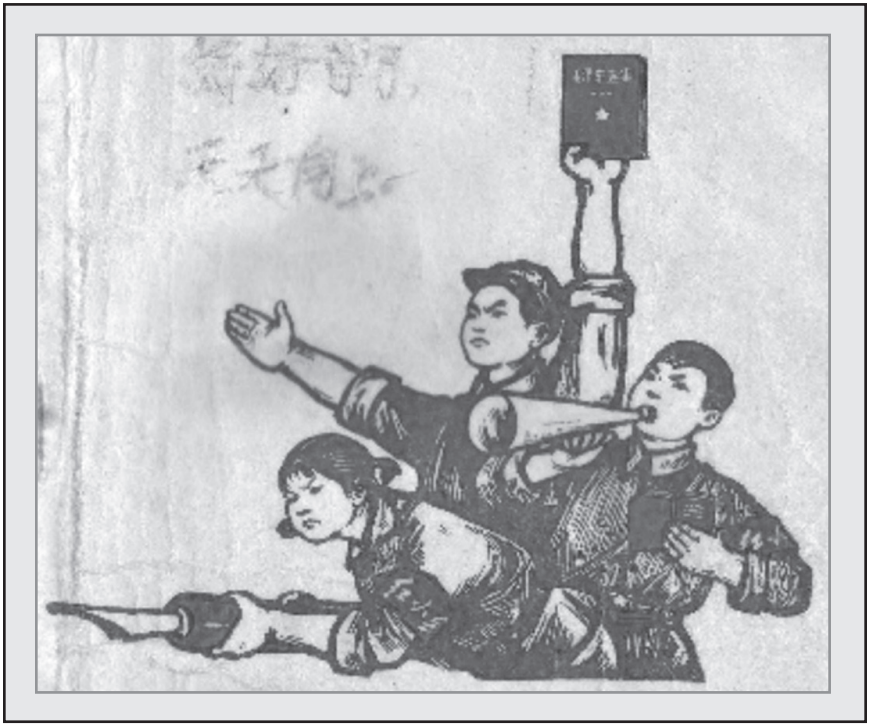
9. Describe your reaction to this imagery.

Once reassembled in the Zoom room, we discussed individual observations from the photos and then proceeded to consider the effects of music on youth and its use to educate or indoctrinate children. Our conclusions in this series were aligned with those in Bryant's thesis. Children were recognized by the government to be a small but important part of the nation, and songs like "Tiny Little Screw Cap" musically identified children as vital parts of wide-reaching efforts to build and maintain the strength of China (Bryant, 2018).

Russia: Education and Protest from the Soviet Era to Putin

As relations between the United States and Russia face their warmest point since the Cold War (Sokolsky and Rumer, 2020), any presentation of contemporary Russian music, protest, and politics first necessitates a review of this nation's rich legacy of music education and brilliant compositional

Figure 2. Guangxi Elementary School Textbook Cover from 1971



gifts to the world stage as well as the attendant challenges made by its government. Censorship in music has a long tradition, taking root in Tsarist Russia (1574–1918), flourishing through the autocracy, and remaining dominant into the twenty-first century. We launched our discussions in class with a contemporary view of the country and examined the limited but meaningful dialogue the United States and the former Soviet Union, now Russia, have managed to maintain in recent years. Aided by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a bipartisan, nonprofit policy research organization, our readings focused on modern deconfliction efforts and several regular, structured bilateral engagements between our countries (Newlin, et. al, 2020). Next, we listened to and analyzed song lyrics by Russian artists: the Moscow-based electronic duo, Nikolai Kostylev and Anastasiya Kreslina (also known as IC3PEAK), whose political undertones in their hit "Death No More" got them detained by police and interrogated for "crossing the line" (Kim, 2019). We revisited this notion of "crossing the line" throughout the semester as we considered the borders, barriers, and demarcated red lines that have long defined regions, nations, and peoples.

We considered other musical artists such as rapper Dmitry Kuznetsov (also known as "Husky" *хаски*), who faced jail time after defying a ban on performance (BBC, 2018). According to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Husky's music "degenerated" Russia. In 2018, Putin articulated just how music and politics intertwine in his country: "Rap music rested upon three pillars—sex, drugs and protest," he said. "I am most worried about drugs. This is the way towards the degradation of a nation" (Kramer, 2018). In this statement, Putin also argued that since it is impossible to stop rap, the State needed to navigate and control it.

Still, teaching honors students about music and protest in modern Russia is incomplete without honoring their history. The rich musical education and compositional heritage developed in the U.S.S.R. influenced the entire world, and its accompanying censorship (including persistent bans of some of the world's greatest composers) throughout the Soviet regime is important to understand and acknowledge in the context of this course. While Russian music education began in Tsarist Russia, it was during the Soviet era that the government established a State-sponsored music education system that provided to millions of students throughout the country excellent music training and fundamentals. This system produced many great composers and classical performers who later left the country to extend this reputation for musicianship all over the globe (Pisarenko, 2017). The music education system in Soviet Russia at this time, though, was accompanied by strict censorship.

Composers were hired by the Soviet government to write special compositions for young students that integrated national folk imagery and song, patriotism, and pride. If composers created pieces that met with disapproval from the regime, they faced harsh humiliation and discipline. Skilled and reputable composers, such as Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, Dmitry Kabalevsky, and Aram Khachaturian, were each attacked as "formalists" by the Soviet cultural idealist, Andrei Zhadanov. Many others, too, faced threats to their works and livelihoods: from systematic cessations of all publication and performance to jail sentences in Siberia and even death (Schonberg, 1979).

In this context, students were asked to do research independently on Shostakovich's music. Equipped with guidelines for literature review and recordings, the following class was devoted to discussing the tragic background of Shostakovich's symphony *Babi Yar* and to analyzing a poem of the same title written by Yevgény Yevtushénko (who later defected to the United States). These lessons about Russia's State-sponsored musical heritage, its concomitant censors and bans, and the contemporary artists who turn to music (particularly rap) as a means for protest and youthful expression helped cultivate in students a sense of common ground and helped them identify with a culture that seemed, on the surface, to be very different from their own.

Cuba: Diasporas, Drums, and Dance

Of the five nations in our series, Cuba is situated in closest proximity to the United States, so we explored the ways that its music makers made their way to our shores and influenced American music of the late twentieth century.

The island has been governed by the Communist Party of Cuba since 1965, and in the context of music we considered the tensions and challenges this country has faced both as a nation and as a people. According to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an independent, nonpartisan think tank, although Cuba was a major foreign policy challenge for the United States during the Cold War, "the relationship has thawed considerably in recent years" (2021). Though tensions between our countries still linger, we examined several politically charged events of the mid-century in the context of music and musical response. This segment in our series focused on creative and political influence and identity.

The complexities of the musical relationship between the United States and Cuba date back to the 1940s, when Afro-Cuban jazz emerged in New York City, "mixing elements from traditional American jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms. Meanwhile, Cuban music styles such as calypso, mambo, and cha-cha continued entering the American music scene into the '50s" (Foster, 2020). Since the Revolution of 1959, Cuban musicians have fled their country in protest of Fidel Castro's regime. In her survey of Cuban music history, Maya Roy examines the scope of music prior to the Cuban Revolution and how it flourished outside of its borders as a result of musicians' breaking free in revolt (2002). These artists, along with Cuban-Americans Celia Cruz and Gloria Estefan, were discussed in class, supported by Cuban scholar Horacio Sierra's explication of the phenomenal "Sounds Machine" (2018).

We also examined other aspects of the complexity and excitement of Cuban music and politics, such as the role of veteran musicians as ambassadors of Cuban sound through an album revival and film of the same name, *Buena Vista Social Club.* Their music and the film quickly spread around the world and brought Cuban music of old back to life and well into the current century while bringing forgotten Cuban musicians to the stage. Such musicians as Rubén González, Ibrahim Ferrer, and Omara Portuondo returned to performance venues throughout the globe and introduced their music to a much different world. We spent considerable time listening to and reflecting on the concept of musical legacy and the tragic abandonment of sounds during the forced isolation thrust upon Cuba during Castro's rule. Within this sequence, we examined primary sources, such as Buena Vista Social Club recordings, including their artists and testimony, and we also covered topics such as the significance of dance and drums in Cuban culture.

Cuban percussion is a rich musical legacy derived in part from African slavery and the struggles of those who arrived as slaves. For these non-native people, drums were a means to "safeguard some fragments of their cultural patrimony—in which they succeeded despite the measures adopted by the Spanish authorities and, later, the first republican governments to erase every vestige of the black heritage" (Nodal, 1983). Another important expression in Cuban culture and history is dance. Dances against many forms became an outlet to transcend segregation, as people of different race and class met to navigate, in movement, the social barriers forced on them. Various aspects of segregation between white and black Cubans were discussed through the lens of Pilar Egüez Guevara's scholarship on racial and class segregation as "one measure to enforce control and secure the colonial social order in the

rapidly growing public spaces of Havana" (2016, p. 234). Finally, we considered Cuban-American relations in this series, with the Cuban Missile Crisis at the fore. We discussed this crisis as it was depicted in American media and history books. Students reviewed what they were taught in secondary school on this subject, what is understood now, and resultant changes in American foreign policy through the term of President Obama.

Iran: Pre- and Post-Revolution

Onetime allies, the United States and Iran have seen tensions escalate repeatedly in the four decades since the Islamic Revolution (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). This situation has intensified in the last four years, and with recent changes in the American presidency, much attention has been paid in the foreign press to Iran's nuclear capacity and its potential threats to global security (Plett-Usher, 2021).

Even though tensions between these two countries have sometimes peaked to the brink of war, recent polls indicate that a majority of Americans are not able to locate Iran on a map nor to demonstrate accurate knowledge about the two countries' relationship (Mindock, 2020). While Iran's persistent threats continue to occupy American news, a survey among my students showed an unfamiliarity with the country, its history and current government, and the rising tide of tension its nuclear program creates for global society. Teaching Iran's rich cultural and musical heritage against the backdrop of the Islamic revolution presented opportunities for students to understand and appreciate classical and contemporary Persian music while evaluating it in the context of gender and religion. At the beginning of this sequence, students were presented with a collection of articles providing a background of Iran from different angles.

Food and travel critic Yasmin Khan's profile of Iran's cultural, political, and religious histories provided the foundation from which we began to consider its music (Khan, 2017). Then, with Ameneh Youssefzadeh's ethnomusicological study (2000) on the role of official organization in Iran's music since the Revolution as our touchstone, we discussed the ways that civil unrest has affected the country's music and music makers. We examined women musicians in post-revolutionary Iran and used Youssefzadeh's later scholarship (2004) on daily life and song in theocracy.

To best understand the events that led to the 1979 Revolution, we approached Iranian life from two different perspectives: from within the

country (Al Jazeera, 2009) and from the West (Hamedani, 2019). After viewing the documentaries, we discussed the efforts Iranians made to preserve traditional Persian poetry, music, and artistic performance, and we examined the testimony of female musicians, such as Sepideh Jandaghi, whose voices were banned by Islamic law. Jandaghi and many others, while restricted to women-only venues, were allowed to share their voices and music only with other women (Lavenant and Shantyaei, 2018). At the end of this series, we surveyed several music videos featuring the segregation between men and women on stage. To conclude our Iranian sequence, we considered the music of Iranian musicians in Canadian exile, such as Iranian singer and actress, Googoosh/Faegheh Atashin (Hemmasi, 2017).

CREATING COMMUNITY DURING COVID

As an honors instructor offering a music-related curriculum to mostly non-music majors, I feel that my primary teaching goal is to nurture and condition the students' ears so that they gradually welcome and become attuned to foreign musical elements, concepts, works, and performers; thus, by experiencing the music slowly as a group, they sense the delicacies of the magic called "music." I was reminded of my curricular objective last fall (2020) when students arrived at campus scared and overwhelmed by the outrageous misfortune and challenge of learning and living in a COVID environment. Of all the many strains on teaching, none was greater than creating and maintaining a sense of community across shifting modalities for distance learning. Inspired by John Spencer's "Building an Empowered Community in Distance Learning Courses" (2020), I adapted this course with "community" always at the fore.

When the pandemic abruptly hit, I noticed that my students were surprised by the extent of change thrust upon them within weeks. Schools closed down, students were sent home, and in the midst of it all, educators were tasked with transitioning to online learning platforms. In her essay "What About the Students?," English professor Billie Wright Dziech considers the academic, social, and psychological extent of loss that our students are experiencing; she posits that empathy toward our students is vital for their long-term wellbeing and reminds educators that "the pandemic has taught us that the greatest challenge and obligation we face is recognizing that our students are among its most severe and overlooked victims" (2020). From my observations, 2020's fall semester was one of emotional turbulence for students. When encouraged to reflect and share their experience, many struggled with

family situations back home, voicing their collective worries, fears, grieving, and empathy for the sick, the caregiver, the dying, and the mourner. I, too, mourned the loss of a fresh, new first semester for freshmen that typically launches an exciting and thriving campus life. It pained me to know that surviving this harsh reality meant internal and geographic isolation.

In line with other honors courses at Ball State University Honors College, I adapted Inquiry in Global Studies to a remote synchronous sequence delivered on Tuesday and Thursday at 8:00am via Zoom. The class met this way throughout the entire semester. Lectures and activities were all conducted live except for a small number of asynchronous activities such as discussion boards on Canvas. The rationale to meet synchronously without fail every week was to retain students' attention and to motivate their learning. Committing to maintain learning momentum by providing regular, timely lectures and feedback (Volpe and Crosier, 2020), I prioritized my availability and accessibility while emphasizing to students the importance of structure and regularity. Below are several measures I took to help nurture students and ease into a healthy start and active engagement.

1. Welcome Letter

   Modelled after Antone M. Goyak's (2020) effective connections with students, I introduced myself and our curriculum, providing contact information and unequivocal encouragement to reach out to me at any time during the semester.

2. Welcome Video

   According to instructional designer and author Flower Darby (2020), communication early and often is vital to students' success in online study. A week prior to class time, I sent the students a link to a video that included a small request: "send me an email, tell about yourself: your name, major and minor studies, where are you from, and lastly: describe one country in the world that you wish to explore." By sharing the video with students and eliciting their unique contributions to the class, I enabled them to identify with the course content and professor. I created an opportunity to get to know them prior to class so that we first met with a feeling of familiarity and harmony.

3. Communication Plan

   To accompany the syllabus, I provided a communication plan that listed all the ways to contact me and all our Zoom information for the

class. This plan presented my timeline for emailing each of them the first week and subsequent check-ins throughout the semester. Because we were in a state of collective flux and uncertainty, I added an emergency contact list, including student phone numbers and names of emergency contacts.

4. Pathways toward Trust and Empathy

   In the second week of the semester, I sent an individual email to each of my students ($n = 24$):

   > Hi _____,
   >
   > I wanted to send a quick note and check *how are you doing? Has the first week of school been okay so far? Are you doing okay, need any help, or got questions about the class? If so, do not hesitate to reach out.*
   >
   > Thanks,
   > Dr. Gertsenzon

I received several heartfelt responses of angst and gratitude. One of them read:

> Honestly, this week has been a bit rough. . . . It took me a little bit to get the hang of Canvas, and my books for my other classes still haven't come in. I found some videos online that explain how to customize Canvas to work better for me, so I think I'll be okay as far as class goes. . . . But, my grandma died today, and I'm just sad (understandably). I've heard that there are counseling services on campus. Do they have any service that might help for a situation like this?
>
> Thanks for checking in. . . .

Beyond its obvious emotional charge, this student's response was a stark reminder of the significance of communication and empathy in and beyond the classroom. As a professor, I embrace my role as a mentor and catalyst for my students. I was able to help this student by directing her to the Student Health Services office on campus. Several weeks later, I also made a Zoom appointment with this student, checking in and allowing her to express her feelings. Perhaps I went beyond my role in this regard, but I knew intuitively that during a pandemic just being there for students might add to their success. In this case, the student finished the course at the top of the class, and her excellent papers demonstrated curiosity, a commitment to the subject, and thorough research.

MODIFYING ASSESSMENTS DURING COVID

As institutions of higher learning abruptly pivoted to remote instruction, so too did assessment measures for this course. Assessment-related changes to the curriculum reflected several ad hoc modifications to content access and delivery. Extra participation, additional assignments, flexible deadlines, and digital literatures all came into play in the fall of 2020.

1. Participation, Discussion & Conversation

   Some assignments were typical of honors 100-level introductory sequences. Participation in class discussions was an important component of the honors experience, so students were required to attend most meetings and invited to play a vital role in sharing their unique knowledge and perspective on any given subject. With COVID-19 affecting teaching formats, the "this is the only option" of remote communication through Zoom turned out to be a blessing: it offered stability to students, who logged onto their computers twice a week and found their voices in the early morning through speaking, chatting, and participating with their peers in breakout room conversations; and it became central to participation and engagement throughout the semester. While some class meetings encouraged students to provide their feedback in Canvas discussions, these were only used a handful of times throughout the semester since my goal was to use different types of assessments week-to-week to keep students alert and interested in the subject matter rather than creating a steady routine of identical assignment formats.

2. Written Assessments

   Writing exercises and assessments changed weekly in scope, format, and grading scale; these involved reading materials, videos, and music recordings. While some assessments simply asked students to summarize the content of articles, others required them to integrate several types of information in their written responses. Several small research assignments involved guided research on a musical figure or composition, e.g., one of three symphonies by Dimitri Shostakovich. Overall, students had one assignment for each theme in the series. Pre-COVID, written assignments based on films were assigned after we watched excerpts in class, but such an option was not available through the

Zoom interface, so I assigned films to be viewed independently and then be reviewed in writing and discussion afterwards.

3. Listening Test

   An important component in assessing student learning was a listening exam, proctored during the second-to-last meeting in the semester, in which students were asked to identify a musical piece by listening to 45–60 second excerpts. Throughout the semester, students explored various musical pieces. At semester's end, students received a study guide that included a selection of the semester's musical recordings. As students prepared for this cumulative exam, they recognized the breadth and scope of what they had learned. In reviewing a weighty selection of the music they had learned throughout the semester, students were reminded how much knowledge they had acquired.

4. Class Presentations

   The culmination of study for many students was the class presentation and supplemental paper. For this final presentation, students were given two options: present their own theme, or choose a theme covered in class and shed light or provide additional perspective on it. Pre-COVID, students often chose topics from established themes and simply elaborated. This year, however, saw a marked difference in class presentation. A majority of students selected topics not previously covered in class, enthusiastically delved into independent research, and delighted in developing new subjects and sharing them with peers. The accompanying paper—the bedrock of the presentation—was a requisite and important component of this final project. The aim of writing a paper is to help students gain confidence for their oral presentation. By meeting the rigors of academic research and evidential reasoning, students presented with clarity and cohesiveness. As is typical, this class attracted a few students majoring in music education or theatre studies, or minoring in music performance. Accordingly, in the academic year preceding COVID, class presentations culminated in a public showcase of performances, but this option was not available in a distance learning paradigm. Therefore, these students recorded their performances and incorporated them in their presentations to the class.

Course objectives were met in this series of class presentations. In 2019, when class was in-person, these presentations were live performances open to the

public, but 2020 students delivered on the Zoom platform with file sharing. Presentation software and applications such as PowerPoint, Prezi, and Google Slides were commonly used. Some students majoring in music education, theatre, and other music-related subjects recorded and uploaded their musical performances to YouTube and provided links while others performed live during their presentations. Students who chose to engage in topics independent of our class study surprised and delighted the class with a broad range of interest, information, and insight. These special topics included:

- Political music and nationalism in Nepal
- Reggae protest music
- Music and politics in Nicaragua
- Ilse Weber's poetry and music in the Nazi concentration camps
- Haitian revolutionary and struggle music
- Political music in Turkey during and after Ataturk
- Somalia's music before and after the Civil War
- Korean national folksong, "Arirang"

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Elements of populace, government, power, civic and musical expression, and global understanding converged in each presentation and paper. Reflective writing exercises provided an opportunity for students to consider the ways they identified with the music and then to articulate their personal connection to faraway places, distant times, and disparate voices. The final student showcase was testimony to how innovative honors curricula can connect us even during a double pandemic of social isolation and COVID-19, serving as a reminder of why human connections are so powerful and how the magical interactions of music and audience enrich the world.

Eden Sanders, Freshman

Majoring in both Spanish and Japanese and minoring in linguistics, Eden lectured on the Italian partisan song "Bella Ciao." She recorded her instrumental performance of the song on the kalimba, an African musical instrument with a wooden soundboard and metal keys.

> I found that Bella Ciao had an interesting story and a particular historical importance. I discovered a kalimba cover of it on YouTube, which I used for reference when doing my own performance. I liked the upbeat nature of the song itself, along with the contrast of intense and fiery lyrics. This song has remaining importance today through media and celebrations, which solidified my decision to use it as my presentation topic. I also found that the different style which the kalimba offered enhanced my presentation by providing a variety of new feelings evoked in comparison to the original and other modern versions.

Catherine, Freshman

Majoring in music education, Catherine presented on musical response to conflicts in the autonomous regions of China. Part of her lecture focused on the ways that the musical *Les Misérables* was adapted in Chinese autonomous regions and used as a call to arms, inspiring an uprising and eventually becoming an anthem of democratic protest. Catherine performed an instrumental version of "Do You Hear the People Sing?" on the bassoon. Her description of a solitary recording experience and her clever combination of technologies and applications added to an inspiring feel of attunement and imperfection—a "let's use what's available to us" ingenuity that is so endemic to this difficult time.

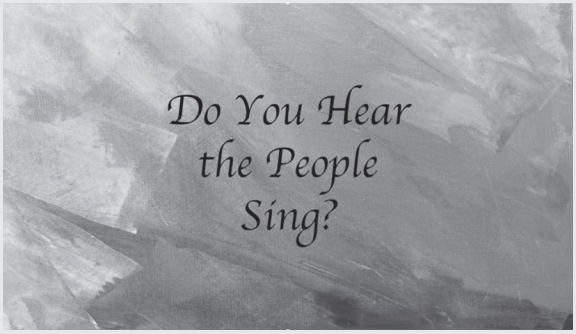
> I have an interest in China and musicals, and by chance I learned that the song "Do You Hear the People Sing" from the musical *Les Misérables* was being used as a current protest song there and I felt like I had to do this song because it fit so perfectly with my interests. I recorded it in a spare room of my house, and I used phone recordings and iMovies to make the YouTube video. I also played the melody line on my bassoon and wrote a simple piano accompaniment that I had a music notation program play while I was recording. My version of this song is defiantly far from perfection, and not performed with original instrumentation, but I hope people get a sense of inspiration from both my version and its the original version.

Jacob Motz and Alaina Marks, Freshmen

Both majoring in music education, Jacob and Alaina worked collaboratively to create their own version of a Korean folk song entitled "Arirang":

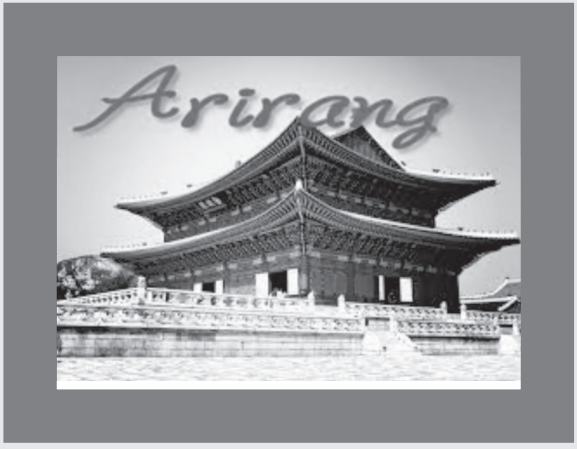
Eden's Presentation of Bella Ciao on Kalimba

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkcWwKhvn3Y



Catherine's Bassoon Presentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtZEmy5n_KE



Jacob and Alaina's Collaborative Interpretation of Arirang

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBEsFm3t6AY

> We met many times over the course of the production to learn and practice the foreign lyrics—chanting, of course, because of the pandemic. Without guidance from a native speaker, we tried to replicate the pronunciations from previous recordings of the piece, an exploration we both enjoyed. The recording process occurred virtually. Through extended trial and error, we recorded individually, and then worked to align our parts in a digital audio workstation, which required many re-takes and even an organic metronome! We hope the final performance captures a little bit of the spirit of Arirang!
>
> —Jacob Motz and Alaina Marks

> I chose to research the Arirang after recognizing its tune from John Barnes Chance's "Variations on a Korean Folk Song"—a piece I played in high school band. Though some orchestral arrangements of Arirang provided inspiration for my interpretation, I largely departed from their penta-harmonic structure. In the composition process, I instead left the harmonic soundscape completely open, utilizing more chromatic harmony and extensions reminiscent of jazz. I thought this amalgamation of my and North Korea's would be a unique spin on the folk song and a commendation of its interpretative legacy.
>
> —Jacob Motz

> I initially joined Jacob after he asked me to sing the vocals. I was excited both to collaborate with a classmate and to learn about a musical style I originally had no experience with. As we worked on the project, I became especially interested in the cultural significance of the piece—where I based most of my research for the presentation. In order to honor this cultural heritage and the style of Korean music, I spent a lot of time practicing the piece.
>
> —Alaina Marks

CONCLUSION

> There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees, which are falsehoods on the other.
>
> —Blaise Pascal

An interval is the physical or temporal distance between two things. Teaching music in a global perspective during a global pandemic was in many ways about bridging intervals—crossing the lines between home and

school, Us and Them, pre-COVID and post-COVID—thus eroding boundaries and situating learning and appreciation for one another within the spaces in-between. The numerous challenges to teacher and student during the coronavirus crisis presented rich opportunities for coming together in novel, mutually beneficial ways. Amid the reality of COVID and all its attendant complexities and challenges—social unrest, political contestation and uncertainty, and sheltering in place—Inquiry in Global Studies: Music and Politics provided honors students with an opportunity to experience in body and mind how music intersects, reflects, and sometimes transcends political and personal circumstance.

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