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### Where Did You Come From? Where Do You Go? Searching For Context In The Music Curriculum

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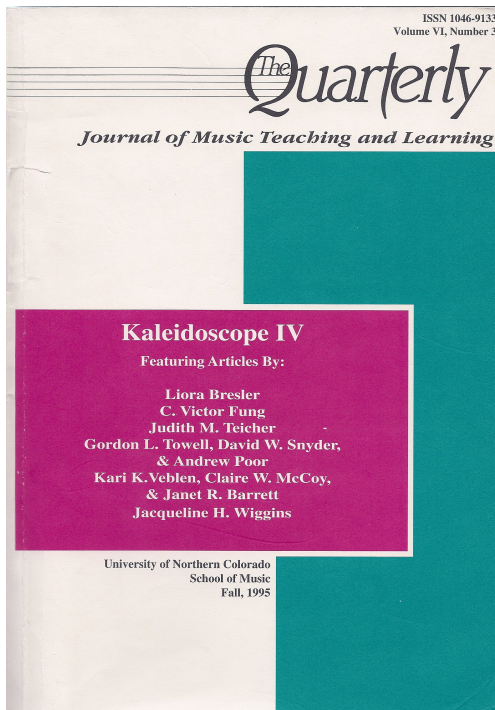
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# Where Did You Come From? Where Do You Go? Searching For Context In The Music Curriculum

**By Kari K. Veblen, Claire W. McCoy  
and Janet R. Barrett**

Even in our increasingly mobile and electronically networked society, geographical origins and birthplaces continue to fascinate us. When we meet a new colleague or prospective friend, the conversation inevitably turns at some point to the question of home town, and the series of moves or circumstances that brought this person to this particular moment of the here and now. During the quick autobiographical review, the participants in the conversation often discover shared experiences, affiliations, or mutual acquaintances. The process of recognizing some connection between individuals is gratifying, and, at the same time, piques our interest because of all of the possible variants of personal and professional lives. The conversational search, far from idle chatter, functions as a powerful social act to establish who we are and how we are related in some fashion to the other.

So it is with music. New songs or works are not new for long as we relate what we hear to all that we have heard before, searching for stylistic categories, recognizable texts,

and characteristic motives. Perceived similarities and differences influence how deeply we respond to a new piece, how likely we are to seek it out for another hearing, or how knowledgeably we perform it. An individual's pool of musical encounters (his or her personal repertoire) provides an important grounding in musical context. But to what extent do music educators deliberately acknowledge the social and historical contexts of musical works in classrooms in the same manner that we seek information about a new personal acquaintance? How is this search for context central to curriculum in music and the education of music teachers? In practice, it often seems that the origins and social meanings of musical works are incidental and secondary to the structural elements of music that receive primary emphasis. The purpose of this article is to address the contextual dimensions of music through an introductory illustration of a search for the origins and transformations of a Southern fiddling tune, a discussion of the implications of music's historical and social

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contexts for curriculum development and teacher education, and an invitation to teachers to examine the transformation of texts through the common vehicle of parody songs.

### How the Search for Musical Context Begins

Not long ago, one of us (Janet) was transporting her teenaged percussionist to a rehearsal when he began to sing the Southern fiddling tune, "Cotton-Eyed Joe":

Where did you come from?  
Where do you go?  
Where did you come from?  
Cotton-Eyed Joe?  
Where did you come from?  
Cotton-Eyed Joe?

If it hadn't been for Cotton-Eyed Joe,  
I'd-a been married long time ago,  
I'd-a been married long time ago.

Surprised at the sudden switch in repertoire from the usual Weezer or Green Day alternative band lyrics, Janet asked Alex how he knew this song. He quickly replied that it was included on a new CD, *Sex and Violins*, by a Swedish technopop group called the Rednex, and offered to play it for her. Surely enough, the tune was similar to the Doc Watson version Janet knew, but was all dressed up in the guise of sampled fiddle, banjo, and vocal layers over a decidedly inconsistent percussion track. The curious transplantation of this song to a new time, place, and technology resulted in an investigation of the musical ontogeny of *Cotton-Eyed Joe*, a study that netted both history and social commentary, carried along by the discovery of an intriguing variety of texts.

#### Cotton-Eyed Joe

The familiar Doc Watson version of "Cotton-Eyed Joe" is one of many variants of a popular American fiddle tune still played for square dances. This tune sets the stage for a Depression-era dance in the soundtrack for the movie, *Places in the Heart* (Watson, 1984).

But to what extent do music educators deliberately acknowledge the social and historical contexts of musical works in classrooms in the same manner that we seek information about a new personal acquaintance?

Don't you remember, don't you know  
Daddy worked a man called Cotton-Eyed Joe,  
Daddy worked a man called Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Had not 'a' been for Cotton-Eyed Joe,  
I'd 'a' been married a long time ago,  
I'd 'a' been married a long time ago.

Down in the cotton patch  
down below  
Everybody's singing the Cotton-Eyed Joe,  
Everybody's singing the Cotton-Eyed Joe.

I know a gal lives down below  
Used to see her but I don't no mo',  
Used to see her but I don't no mo'.

Tune my fiddle and rosin my bow  
Gonna make music where ever I go  
Play a little tune called Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Norm Cohen notes that "this ante-bellum song has been found in both White and Negro tradition and probably originated in the minstrel theatre" (1975). Other text variants, such as the following collected by John and Alan Lomax during the 1930's, evoke a starker image of the times.

If it had not 'a' been for Cotton-Eyed Joe,  
I'd 'a' been married forty years ago.

Cornstalk fiddle and cornstalk bow  
Gwine to beat hell out-a Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Gwine to go shootin' my forty-fo'  
Won't be a nigger in a mile or mo'.

Hain't seen ol' Joe since way last fall,  
Say he's been sold down to Guines Hall.

Great long line and little short pole,  
I'm on my way to the crawfish hole.

Oh, it makes dem ladies love me so  
W'en I come round a-pickin' Cotton-Eyed Joe.



Hol' my fiddle an' hol' my bow,  
Whilst I knock ol' Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Oh, law, ladies, pity my case,  
For Ise got a jawbone in my face.

O Lawd, O Lawd, come pity my case,  
Fore I'm gettin' old an' wrinkled in de face.  
(Lomax, 1934, pp. 262-263).

Clearly the Lomax version would not appeal to modern sensibilities because of its racism. The Lomaxes write that Cotton-Eyed Joe was a person whose eyes were milky white from trachoma (Cohen, 1975), a contagious disease of the conjunctiva and cornea, which is a major cause of blindness in Asia and Africa (Soukhanov, 1992, p. 1896). Marion Thede (1967) suggests an alternative interpretation: cotton-eyed is "a term descriptive of a person with very light blue eyes, a type often called 'white eye' " (p. 26). Thede's collected text shown below is credited to "Negroes on the Mississippi River."

Cornstalk fiddle and shoe-string bow  
Come down gals on Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Wanna go to meetin' and wouldn't let me go  
Had to stay home with Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Come a little rain and come a little snow  
The house fell down on Cotton-Eyed Joe.

The expression "come down" on a piece of music means to put spirit into the fiddling or singing. In this case, the text "Come down gals on Cotton-Eyed Joe" means "to dance with abandon." Thede further notes that: "One can readily see in this ballad that the three stanzas were not the work of one person, or at least were not improvised at the same time, since 'Cotton-Eyed Joe' in the first stanzas is used in speaking of the music, but in the remainder of the ballad, is employed to mention a person" (p. 26).

The Swedish technopop cover of "Cotton-Eyed Joe" is not the only contemporary remake. While the Rednex version features newly made verses on the same theme, a recent recording by Michelle Shocked (1992), entitled "Prodigal Daughter," grafts a new story onto the old tune.

What's to be done with a prodigal son?  
Welcome him home with open arms  
Throw a big party, invite your friends  
Our boy's come back home

When a girl goes home with the oats he's sown  
It's draw your shades and your shutters  
She's bringing such shame to the family name  
The return of the prodigal daughter,  
singing, oh Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Went to see the Doctor and I almost died  
When I told my mama Lordy how she cried  
Me and my daddy were never too close  
But he was there when I needed him most

Look here comes a prodigal son  
Fetch him a tall drink of water  
But there's none in the cup 'cause he drank it  
all up  
Left for a prodigal daughter,  
singing, oh Cotton-Eyed Joe

Had not've been for the Cotton-Eyed Joe  
I'd have been married a long time ago

Out in the cornfield I stubbed my toe  
I called for the doctor, Cotton-Eyed Joe

In her liner notes, Shocked writes:

My early intention was to present this record with a cover photo of myself wearing blackface . . . [to] provide a genuine focus on the real "roots" of many of the tunes included; blackface minstrelsy. It's my contention that blackface tradition is alive and well hidden behind a modern mask. I believe that "black-ing up" should be done correctly . . . in a context of true respect for the cultures we ape.

These texts offer individual puzzles. How do we untangle the Lomaxes' blind fiddler from Thede's blue-eyed African-American? How would a young teenager identify with the Rednex version, an American expression now sampled and diffused in a global technopop commercial marketplace? What would the Swedish Rednex band read into this song—and how did they come by it? How does Michelle Shocked use tune and images to convey messages, for example, love 'em and leave 'em reference from original; ironic use of a dance tune for a bitter subject; outmoded attitudes about women as objects that can become "damaged goods"; parallels between oppression of African-

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Americans and women, and so forth. Finally, how do these five versions of this song (Rednex, Doc Watson, Lomax, Thede, Shocked) reflect social issues of different times? What musical issues do they raise?

Situating a work in context helps us understand the origin, journeys, and socio-economic-cultural influences that envelop the work. A simple tune such as "Cotton-Eyed Joe" may or may not be worthy of inclusion in a curriculum. Nevertheless, this common tune carries powerful connections and associations that may illuminate past or present attitudes.

#### **The Significance of Musical Context**

Music can open up areas of inquiry and can be used to prompt discussion and discovery. People use music to make sense of their world, to convey powerful emotions, to communicate and to teach about their lives. Such meanings are an important part of music, content of the curriculum in music, and other curricular goals.

Both original context and transmission process work to create meaning in a song. Musical meanings are not static. They can be lost, perverted, enhanced, or transformed through the processes of oral or written transmission. "Cotton-Eyed Joe" serves as an example of how verses floated in and out of favor. The Lomax variant, which may be the oldest version presented here, contains wording and sentiments that have been discarded. Some persistent images such as fiddle and bow or phrases "Down in the cotton (corn) field" and "I'da been married a long time ago," may be reconfigured or resituated within a new text to create fresh meanings.

Woody Guthrie's widely sung "This Land is Your Land" offers another illustration of how meaning may be lost or changed through transmission. Familiar verses as sung in public schools declaim a simple patriotic message, that "this land was made for you and

me." Other verses, which are rarely heard and seldom printed in school songbooks, relate a more complex point of view:

As I went walking, I saw a sign there  
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."  
But on the other side it didn't say nothing,  
That side was made for you and me.

In the shadows of the steeple I saw my people,  
By the Relief Office I seen my people;  
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking  
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living can ever stop me  
As I go walking that freedom highway;  
Nobody living can ever make me turn back,  
This land was made for you and me.  
(Schmid, 1991, p. 44)

Woody Guthrie wrote these words during his travels as a musician and union activist during the Great Depression in the 1930s. The "lost" verses restore their original charged meaning to this worn tune. This meaning was brought home to one of us (Kari) while visiting her aunt's reading group in San Diego. The setting was a living room, lined with enlarged archival stills of Depression scenes, where almost thirty women considered Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. As the discussion progressed, it became clear that many of the women had been "Okies" as children during the Depression. Their stories were compelling and unsentimental. Talk turned to the contemporary political climate. One woman asked quietly: "Don't you sometimes feel that these times are like the depression days?" As the reading group breathed life into Steinbeck's novel by tracing parallels between the 1930's and 1990's polarization of wealth and poverty, these unused verses by Woody Guthrie leapt to mind, breathing life into a patriotic song. Clearly "This Land is Your Land" has been rendered safe by the exclusion of problematic verses.

And yet, these images may hold the most relevance for us today. How might such forgotten words initiate student inquiry?

Music often comes packed with hidden messages as voices of the dominant culture vie with minority voices. We can uncover these messages and learn how to read them, often through comparing different versions. A provocative instance of submerged meaning is revealed through tracing the history of "Run, Children, Run" (Cloud, 1993). Strands of discourse woven through multiple texts of common songs such as "Yankee Doodle," (Sonneck, 1909) "Donkey Riding," (Beethoven et al, 1988, p. 28; Black Family, 1986) and "Children Go Where I Send Thee" (Aronson, 1995, pp. 164-165) may reveal similar complex interactions, travels, and competing power structures.

### Context and the Music Curriculum

These illustrations of the journeys of "Cotton-Eyed Joe" and "This Land is Your Land" also hint at the complex thinking processes that lead to an investigation of context. They include the realization of a song's displacement ("Something seems strange about this tune in a technopop setting"), the search through categories and styles in an effort to situate the tune ("I know I've heard this tune before but not in this style"), and the sense of resolution as the puzzle is finally solved ("Of course! This is the same tune I heard played by a country fiddler in the movie, *Places in the Heart*"). A displacement experience sets up a path of inquiry as the listener first recognizes the general shape of the tune, accompanied by a vague realization that something is "not quite right" about its location in the musical environment of the moment. Next, the listener searches through the vast pools of known repertory, searching for some link that will either give a name to the tune or a location among already known styles and genres of music. Often, in what seems like random order, listeners sift through labels such as *folk music*, *Baroque*, *bluegrass*, *reggae*, or *technopop*; connections related to factors such as ethnicity, social class, or affiliation with peers; comparisons with particular musical examples performed or studied in formal training; or the aggregate of associations gained more indirectly

through film scores, television themes, or advertising. Finally, the listener "gets it" as the solution springs to attention; the song is *replaced*. In the case of the technopop version of a transplanted tune like "Cotton-Eyed Joe," the solution may be accompanied by a sense of wonder that the song has strayed so far from its more familiar home.

There is nothing unusual or uncommon about this process of recognition. Our aural environment provides plentiful opportunities for such activity, particularly as new stylistic hybrids proliferate and access to new musical forms widens. In what ways, however, is this notion significant to curriculum or music teacher education? The search for context is a natural "sense-making" tendency that has implications for the way we choose, teach, and learn new music. These implications extend beyond a perfunctory mention of the origin of a song to central questions of curriculum and instruction, such as: How do the processes of curriculum selection and development recognize the contextual content of musical examples? What forms of contextual knowledge enhance understanding of music? How does a search for context suggest opportunities for meaningful work in classrooms?

Criteria for content selection in music usually include considerations of performance difficulty for students, the potential of the example to embody the structural and expressive elements of music (the "conceptual approach"), and representation of a wide variety of styles and genres. Although historical and cultural contexts are broadly addressed through identification of style, more specific references to time and place are often incidental. When this grounding is omitted, mentioned only in passing, or trivialized in the curriculum, significant opportunities to represent music as an embodiment of human aspirations and as a reflection of historical and social meanings are compromised. Musical performance, listening, and arranging are informed by connections to the lives of individuals and communities who are represented in sound and through sound.

Contextual knowledge is built upon a foundation of related facts, dates, and settings but the mortar of understanding is sup-

Even if teachers fail to set a new song in a frame of reference to enhance the meaning, students will do so anyway, as shown by the anecdotes of “fractured” song texts that provide deep chuckles in the staff room. The sense-making tendency prevails, even when our meanings are hardly “authentic” to the original intent.

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plied by the meanings students bring to the instructional setting and the new insights gained through rich classroom experiences. Elliott (1995) defines context as “the total of ideas, associations, and circumstances that surround, shape, frame, and influence something and our understanding of that something” (p. 40). This panoramic view of knowledge challenges dominant epistemological views that present knowledge is discreet, fixed, and impersonal. Instead, the content of the curriculum is constructed from understandings that are interconnected, dynamic, and grounded in the storehouses of aural images and related contextual information held by students and teachers. The criteria for content selection are expanded to include the potential of musical examples to connect the past to the present and the manner in which they coincide with prominent interests and experiences of students and teachers. Since shared knowledge is “under construction,” we are challenged to articulate multiple and sometimes ambiguous points of view in our quest for enlightened musical understanding.

In this article, we are primarily concerned with song. Song texts and tunes are melded to encapsulate both time and place. Students, firmly situated in another time and place, cross paths with the song during an instructional encounter. A search for contextual meaning may follow from three possible intersections between the student and the music: (a) the song at its point of origin, (b) the song’s path of transmission, and (c) the song’s relationship to contemporary experience.

*Point of origin.* What were the impulses of creation? What were the meanings embedded in the work as created? How do we come to know these, as removed as we are from the birth of the song? Just like the pe-

riod of acquaintance described at the beginning of the article, the roots of a piece may be revealed through an examination of the text, but more often will rely on other sources of information to help establish its pedigree. Teachers may assume a presentational mode to establish, both in sound and through verbal description, a scheme of musical and extramusical relationships to aid in learning the new piece. Related familiar songs from the same era or region provide an aural link. Sources outside the song, such as narrative historical accounts, anecdotes, maps, paintings, dances, plays, or poetry, may be used to set the stage for understanding.

Without this contextual backdrop, performance of the song may lack understanding. We can probably think of songs we have sung many times without an adequate understanding of the meaning of the text, a situation that effectively reduces the words to vocables. Repetition sometimes lulls us into an unquestioning acceptance of the words forming on our lips as we sing. For example, it is likely that many children associate “stuck a feather in his hat and called it macaroni” from “Yankee Doodle” more with a comforting lunch than a satirical reference to sartorial fashion during the Revolutionary War (Sonneck, 1909/1972). Even if teachers fail to set a new song in a frame of reference to enhance the meaning, students will do so anyway, as shown by the anecdotes of “fractured” song texts that provide deep chuckles in the staff room. The sense-making tendency prevails, even when our meanings are hardly “authentic” to the original intent. To establish the contextual origins of pieces, students and teachers are asked to serve as text and tune detectives, and to use auxiliary sources of information to enrich our historically and culturally grounded performance.

Finding good candidates for curriculum work is quite simple; the intrigue starts as students identify paradoxes, conundrums, and ironic twists of meaning thinly veiled in the songs.

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*Path of transmission.* Where have alternate versions come from and how have they traveled from voice to voice or hand to hand? What changes have added to the meaning or transformed the meaning? How do transformations reveal the points of view of the transformers?

When we set about tracing paths, meaning arises from juxtaposition. Multiple versions of works draw us into speculation about the role of music in the lives of others as well as our own, and provide a useful curricular tension, a chance to pique curiosity and mobilize interest around the clash between the familiar and the new. We compare and contrast X with Y and Y with Z. What does that tell us?

Just as some individuals find pleasure in collecting stamps, salt and pepper shakers, or Model-T's, it is easy to get caught up in yet another version of folk songs, arrangements, or instances of musical borrowing. Finding good candidates for curriculum work is quite simple; the intrigue starts as students identify paradoxes, conundrums, and ironic twists of meaning thinly veiled in the songs. As the "Cotton-Eyed Joe" and "This Land Is Your Land" examples suggest, the transformations, transplantations, and alterations of song texts provide entry points to describe changes in patterns of power or prevailing sensibilities. Depth of understanding accrues from wrestling with multiple messages and conflicting points of view. Complementary relationships to disciplines outside of music are readily presented for further exploration.

Bruno Nettl (1995) speaks of "reception history," a branch of disciplinary study that broadens interest beyond "who wrote this piece and when?" to the performances, understandings, and interpretations of a composition since the point of origin. The social and cultural history of reception leads us to ask why certain songs come to be associated strongly with the identity of individuals and groups and to consider how songs are used symbolically to refer to ideas that transcend

original or literal meanings. As music educators seeking valid interdisciplinary links in the curriculum, this reception history should interest us as generalists, eager to show how music can serve as a window to other forms of knowing.

*Relationship to contemporary experience.* What sense do *we* bring to a new song or an old song encountered after a period of silence? What current insights or distortions arise from the here and now? How do new populations of listeners find fresh meaning in works seemingly embedded in the past? Recognizing our situated perspectives can be difficult, for insight often comes from distance. Consider, for example, the intergenerational surprise when parents hear their children singing "golden oldies" in slick, MTV manifestations or when children find out that stodgy parents know all of the words to the latest hits. How are these songs "owned" by father, mother, son, or daughter and affixed anew to the identity of a succeeding generation?

Contemporary life influences our perceptions of the music we encounter. Current events, tragedies, triumphs, and societal problems are "heard" in counterpoint to past voices. The meanings of song texts that lie dormant in our field of attention suddenly amplify when heard in new settings or in relation to shifts in our thinking. In curriculum encounters, these renewals of meaning trigger teachable moments. Why does this text make sense to us now when we've heard it so many times before? Reverberations of the past through the present compel us to stop and examine current personal experience.

Finally, it is worth noting that any given song may warrant investigation from any of these intersections of experience. Sacks and Sacks (1993) provide a fascinating account of the disputed origins of the Confederate anthem, "Dixie," in which they suggest that two African-American musicians from Ohio, Ben and Lew Snowden, taught the song to Daniel

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Decatur Emmett, the more commonly-cited composer. Sacks and Sacks track the tune through various guises from a walkabout song in minstrel shows to its adoption as the Confederate anthem, to satirical Union parodies, and also to a symbol of civil unrest during the 1960s. In the cumulative review of versions, the simple tune takes on potency as a complex powder keg of patriotic, sentimental, racist, and hostile attributions. This review also serves as an account of the reception history of “Dixie.” Layers of perspective and interpretation call out for examination, as Sacks and Sacks suggest:

For good or ill, “I Wish I Was in Dixie’s Land” expresses something of America’s changing character and consciousness. After more than a century and a quarter in the popular repertoire, “Dixie” thrills some and humiliates others. Largely because of its rich variety of meanings, “Dixie” refuses to lie peacefully in that trunk of Victorian sheet music forever consigned to the attic. It grabs at our popular culture in ways both subtle and overt, and it continues to shape the identity of blacks and whites in its community of origin (p. 5).

Connections to contemporary experience are explored as viewers encounter the frequent use of “Dixie” as a gentle overlay to the disturbing scenes of war depicted in the PBS series on the Civil War (Burns, 1990). As we were exploring various versions as a link to historical studies in one of our classes, a student recalled how every day began with the singing of “Dixie” in her Tennessee elementary school, supplanting the Pledge of Allegiance as the opening ritual.

The search for context represents a valid form of curriculum inquiry in music classrooms and an opportunity for creative curriculum development in music teacher education. Curricular materials can lose meaning through haphazard oral transmission or fade

through cycles of publication, resulting in student disengagement, routine enactment of plans, and insipid performance. As an antidote, teachers can search for thorny and provocative musical problems and shape them into vibrant educative experiences. Productive paradoxes of origin and transmission can be identified, alternate versions for juxtaposition collected, and primary and secondary sources of information consulted to raise questions about the intersections of music, history, and culture. Although this work requires commitment of time, access to resources, and considerable intellectual energy, the benefits include satisfying, personal engagement for teachers and students, deeper connections of understanding, and a renewed sense of curricular ownership.

#### **Parodies as a Curricular Challenge to Context**

How does the idea of context apply when the lyrics of a song are deliberately altered so that the song serves a function different than its original function? This practice of parody has become increasingly popular in schools as classroom teachers, in a well-intentioned desire to reach their students through music, create didactic lyrics to pre-existing tunes to teach student facts about science, math, health, geography, or other subjects. The use of didactic parody songs appeals to teachers because (a) music serves as a mnemonic device to help the students remember the text, (b) music often motivates students, and (c) familiar tunes allow teachers to focus instructional time on learning the text, not the tune. The use of parodies in the classroom raises some questions, however, for those who are concerned that students’ experiences in music, both in the music classroom and the general classroom, be authentic and of high quality. While some parodies are



Historical parodies certainly have a rightful place in the music classroom and general classroom as teachers use them to illustrate the power music has to communicate, to influence opinion, and to mobilize people to action.

clever and appropriate, others seem contrived and unmusical. Sometimes the new texts seem inappropriate, given the meanings associated with the original songs.

When pre-existing music becomes the basis for a new song, instrumental composition, or improvisation, listeners—consciously or unconsciously—carry some kind of associated meaning from its previous context to the new setting. Because of these allusions, a new composition using pre-existing music can (a) pay homage to its source, (b) comment upon or suggest parallels to its source, or (c) critique or negate its source (Burkholder, 1994). Weird Al Yankovich's "Eat It," a parody of Michael Jackson's "Beat It," or "Like a Surgeon," a parody of Madonna's "Like a Virgin," are examples of the latter type of allusion. Yankovich's humorous twisting of the original sources forces listeners to reevaluate the value of the originals, which made huge sums of money for their performers. When civil rights marchers, however, sang "No More Segregation" to the tune of the spiritual, "Oh Freedom," they were paying homage to the source song. Knowledge of the origins of the tune and the words originally associated with it lend even greater power to the more contemporary message.

The schoolhouse parody, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Burning of the School," seems deliciously naughty as well as irresistible to children, not only because its words mock institutional authority, but also because its words are juxtaposed with a tune that is usually reserved for solemn occasions. Reciprocally, adults dislike the parody not only because of its inflammatory message (pun intended), but also, perhaps, because it flouts the history of the tune's association with nobler causes. The theme of triumph over adversity is common to various songs that share the tune we associate with "Battle Hymn of

the Republic." Originally a hymn ("Say brothers will you meet us on Canaan's happy shore"), the tune later became associated with the abolitionist movement ("John Brown's Body"), the cause of the North in the Civil War ("Battle Hymn of the Republic"), and justice for laborers ("Solidarity Forever"). The tune's stirring power is a result of its cumulative context as well as its pitches, rhythms, and harmonies.

Historical parodies certainly have a rightful place in the music classroom and general classroom as teachers use them to illustrate the power music has to communicate, to influence opinion, and to mobilize people to action. Students can be challenged to create contemporary parodies using songs that either share some associative meaning, or are contextually antithetical to the new lyrics. These uses of parody deliberately acknowledge the context of the source tune.

A more problematic use of parody in the classroom is one where the original context of the source tune seems ignored or disregarded. Sometimes the source tune and the new text are neutral enough that the parody is innocuous. Using the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell" to teach about the life cycle of frogs may not be the aesthetic highlight of the school day, but it does not pose significant cultural problems in the juxtaposition of text and tune. Of more concern, perhaps, might be kindergarten students singing this anti-drug message to the tune of "The Itsy Bitsy Spider": "The spider took some drugs and fried up all his brain/Then the itsy bitsy spider was never the same again." The way children first hear a song remains firmly planted in their memories. Which association do we want children to have with this tune: carefree child's play or the evils of drugs? Another problematic example is the use of the African-American song, "Dry Bones," to create a parody about archeology:



"Them bones, them bones, them old bones/ They tell the story of the past; Dig up a dinosaur, how 'bout four/Scared stiff at *Jurassic Park*." The unintended effect of such a parody is the trivialization of the spiritual nature of the source tune.

As we reflect on the role of context in music and express concern for tasteful and informed use of borrowed tunes, it is helpful to remember that even discussions of context have a context. The practice of recasting pre-existing music for new uses and resulting negative reactions to that practice are not without historical precedent. During the Renaissance, borrowed tunes found their way into both the Lutheran and Catholic liturgies. Martin Luther set hymn texts to secular melodies when expedient. The practice of using secular songs as the basis for Mass settings, however, met with disapproval by Catholic Church Fathers. Although the passion chorale, "O Sacred Head" and portions of *Messiah* by Handel were originally love songs, the secular origins of these works are nearly lost in history. Time has changed the context we associate with these works.

### Conclusion

Marc Aronson calls for a re-examination of authenticity that recognizes the complexity of culture: "We came into this world two by two, and just as the wonderful mixture of our parents' genes made us, the incredible tapestry of world traditions lie beneath all of our songs and stories. Tracing those tangled lineages gives us our heritage" (1995, p. 168). Like a genealogical search for one's roots, we are unlikely to find every piece of the puzzle or purely authentic versions of works. But the lure of being "onto something" is a powerful motivation for our work in schools. The process of re-situating songs and tunes in historical and cultural contexts or tracing their transformations across regions or generations is challenging and thought-provoking work for teachers and students.

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### Appendix: Selected Versions of "Cotton-Eyed Joe"

#### Recordings

- Carson, Fiddlin' John, "Georgia fiddle bands, Vol. 2," County 544.  
 Carter Brothers and Son, "Echoes of the Ozarks, Vol. 3," County 520.  
 Carter Brothers and Son, "Traditional fiddle music of Mississippi," County 528.  
 Collins, Earl, "That's Earl," Briar 0798.

- The Corn Dodgers, "Cotton Eyed Joe," Rooster Records 101.
- Dalglish, Malcolm and Grey Larsen, "The first of autumn," June Appal Recordings JA026.
- Douglas, Wilson, "The right hand fork of Rush's Creek," Rounder 0047.
- Hall, Kenny and the Sweets Mill String Band, ["same"], Bay 727.
- Highwoods String Band, "No. 3 special," Rounder 0074.
- Hunter, Ernie, "All about fiddling," Stoneway 143.
- Jackson, Tommy, "30 fiddler's greatest hits," Gusto 104.
- Jackson, Tommy, "Instrumentals country style," Mercury SRW 16261.
- Jarrel, Tommy, "Sail away ladies," County 756.
- Martin, Benny, "The fiddle collection," CMH Records CMH-9006.
- Molsky, Bruce, "An anthology," Tennvale 004.
- Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers, "Echoes of the Ozarks, Vol. 1," County 518.
- The Skillet Lickers, "Old time tunes," County 506.
- Trenton, Lee, et al., "In the field: Southeast Tennessee fiddlers," Pine Breeze 005.
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