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Superdiversity in Music Education

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Abstract

Globalization has changed the social, cultural, and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world (Blommaert, J & Rampton, B. Diversities, 13(2), 1–22 (2011)). As new technologies have rapidly developed alongside increased forms of transnational flow, so have new forms of language, art, music, communication, and expression. This rapid and varied blending of cultures, ideas, and modes of communication is what Vertovec (2007) describes as super-diversity—diversity within diversity. In this narrative, I explore the theoretical and methodological pluralism that has aided my research in diverse settings, drawing from post-structuralism, critical theory, sociolinguistics, complexity theory, and discourse analysis—specifically Scollon and Scollon's (Scollon, R & Scollon, W S. Discourses in place: Language in the material world. London: Routledge (2003), 10.4324/9780203422724; Scollon, R & Scollon, W S. Nexus analysis: Discourse and the emerging internet. New York: Routledge (2004)) recommendations for nexus analysis and Blommaert's theoretical principles and concepts of ethnography, globalization, and superdiversity (Blommaert, J. Discourse. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (2005), 10.1017/CBo9780511610295; Blommaert, J. The sociolinguistics of globalization. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (2010), 10.1017/CBO9780511845307; Blommaert, J. Ethnography, superdiversity and linguistic landscapes: Chronicles of complexity. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters (2013)). I promote a need to develop a robust toolkit for music education that (1) better analyzes how we position and are positioned as part of larger groups and practices operating within multiple layers of social, cultural, and historical context, and (2) better advocates for equitable practices and inclusive spaces in our field.

Keywords

discourse, superdiversity, music education, globalization, ethnography, semiotics, nexus analysis

Disciplines

Critical and Cultural Studies | Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication | International and Intercultural Communication | Music Education

MUSIC EDUCATION RESEARCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY:

THEORIES, QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, & METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM

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Introduction

Globalization has changed the social, cultural, and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world (Blommaert & Rampton 2011). As new technologies have rapidly developed alongside increased forms of transnational flow, so have new forms of language, art, music, communication, and expression. This rapid and varied blending of cultures, ideas, and modes of communication is known as "Super-diversity" (Vertovec 2007).

During my graduate work, I became concerned with how people construct and accomplish personal, social, and political meaning in sites of music teaching and learning. My interests were motivated by my employment in a city school district, where students, faculty, and staff came from many different backgrounds than my own. Our classrooms were linguistically, culturally, and symbolically rich sites of interaction, where the diversity of identities and communication styles regularly confused meaning making and issues of access and equity abounded. In my research, I consider how social actors from a variety of cultures negotiate and operate in and across complex sociolinguistic systems to co-construct meaning in musically and linguistically rich environments. In each research site, a new set of theoretical and methodological challenges has presented itself, requiring me to develop a robust toolkit for analysis from which to draw—one that can account for the diversity and complexity of linguistic, cultural, and musical resources, knowledge, and practices employed.

This chapter explains the methodological pluralism that has aided my research and thinking, drawing from post-structuralism, critical theory, sociolinguistics, complexity theory, and discourse analysis—specifically Scollon and Wong Scollon's (2003, 2004) recommendations for *nexus analysis* and Jan Blommaert's theoretical principles and concepts of *ethnography*, *globalization*, and *superdiversity* (2005, 2010, 2013). In it, I promote developing a robust toolkit for music

education research that better analyzes how we position and are positioned as part of larger groups and practices operating within multiple layers of social, cultural, and historical context, and better advocates for equitable practices and inclusive spaces in our field.

Language Matters

What we say and do as musicians and teachers and how we say or do it defines who we are, marks our identities, reflects our time, describes our place, and speaks to our circumstances. In other words, our language, our music, and the ways in which we communicate matter deeply. Michel Foucault (1972) refers to the power-laden ways we use language as *discursive practice*— bodies of "anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative functions" (p. 117). Foucault was interested in how discursive practices play out in socio-cultural systems, the types of systems in which we operate everyday. These include everything from group affiliations with friends, family, and community to employment in a particular field of study and membership in political organizations. Membership and participation in these systems comes with guidelines and tools on how to act, communicate, and operate; and this is what Foucault means as *discursive practice*. In this way, Foucault helps us see discourse as a socially situated practice tied to power. That is, discourse is never just language alone, but fully power-laden modes of communication that move back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world. From this view, language, music, and the forms of communication we use to express ourselves are never neutral. They mediate and construct our understanding of reality, reflect and shape who we are, and are always caught up in social, political, economic, racial, sexual, gendered, religious, and cultural formations. Thus, when we speak and communicate in classrooms, we draw upon language and music to enact specific social activities and

social identities within a specific time, circumstance, and place, making (sub)conscious decisions about what to include and not include based on complex relationships of power. Therefore, analyzing and interpreting discourse within music settings requires us to consider the socio-cultural components of language and music and how it is employed; what it does to people, groups, and societies; and how it may privilege or marginalize people in the process of its use.

Enter Pierre Bourdieu, who developed a *logic of practice*—a process of seeing ways "in which people interact in social settings as co-constructing the realities they inhabit by means of habituated and socially ratified modes of thought and action adjusted to specific social fields" (Blommaert 2015, p. 5). From a Bourdieuian perspective, all social interactions reference socio-historically configured positions from whence people speak and these positions are defined by a *market* of symbolic *capital* in which resources are circulated and distributed. These different positions play out in social arenas in uneven ways, often resulting in symbolic violence or (mis)recognition of linguistic-communicative resources. That is, *distinctions* emerge between legitimate language and deviant forms of language, providing greater access to those who employ the more accepted form within a community or practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Semiotics

In the turn of the millennium, sociologists, linguists, ethnographers, and discourse analysts wanted to know better how discourse operated within these complex systems. These fields drew upon semiotics to expand notions of language beyond speech and text. This expanded view of language included *cultural objects*, such as, gesture, cues, eye gaze, non-linguistic symbol systems, tools, instruments, and technologies; as well as *concepts*, such as, distinctive ways of thinking, feeling, valuing, and believing (Gee 2005). From a semiotician's view, people draw upon cultural objects and concepts as part of a repertoire of semiotic tools that aid individuals in mediating and

constructing meaning within social environments. James Wertsch (1998) and Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon (2004) refer to this process as *mediational means*. These researchers suggest that an examination of mediational means is helpful in revealing how people internalize discourse, because when individuals employ objects or concepts as mediational means they *index* particular ideas or belief systems both inside and outside the space of interaction. These ideas and belief systems come with rules, regulations, and habits of interaction, and these habits are then internalized as discourse—a nod to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. For example, in an elementary general music classroom or a middle school choral rehearsal in the United States, the use of semiotic tools, such as Curwen hand signs, act as a form of mediated language. These hand signs not only index socio-culturally situated frequencies organized into music, but they also index an internalized habit of use by the teachers and students who employ them. Simultaneously, these hand signs also index a historically and culturally situated pedagogical practice developed by individuals in England in the mid-1800s. The hand signs were then appropriated by Hungarian pedagogues in the 1900s and re-appropriated by American pedagogues in the mid-1900s. With over 150 years of use in various sites across Europe and North America, these signs and their practice have become internalized as a discourse in the bodies of music teachers and students who employ them. Additionally, as their history of use indicates, these signs also index and display a structural relationship to European music and European pedagogical dominance in American music education.

Drawing upon semiotic tools as music education researchers can help us display the "structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language" (Wodak 1995, 204). Since discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned, analyzing its mediated use helps expose, demonstrate, and explain processes that take place outside or beside the discourse itself. The goal is to have effects in society, to empower people to remedy social wrongs, give voice to those who are marginalized, and expose power

abuse. To do so, requires close historical and ethnographic analysis of the tools and concepts being employed by social actors.

Nexus Analysis

In the early 21st century, Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon challenged researchers to consider the diversity and complexities within sociolinguistic systems. Their works (2003, 2004) drew upon Foucault to articulate a theoretical overture towards history—using Foucault's concepts of *discursive practice*, the *archive*, and *genealogy* from his book, *Archeology of Knowledge*. The Scollons proposed an approach to discourse analysis, called *nexus analysis*, that is particularly apt for sites of music learning. At the heart of conducting a nexus analysis is an engagement with ethnography, which helps the researcher document and analyze local and social practices; for example, a Suzuki violin lesson at a local community music school is one such social practice. For Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon, "each actor is observed at a site of engagement which is a particular moment of time in a particular place with particular others present . . . [and] with characteristic discourses in place. When the social action is routinely taken at a recognizable time and place [they] call it a nexus of practice" (p. 14). Synchronic events display the traces of (and can only be understood by referring to) normative complexes of social action, resulting in habituated, normalized codes of conduct. These codes, then, are situated in three different aggregates: individual experience, skills and capacities (*the historical body*), social space (*discourses in place*) and patterned, ordered, genred interaction (*the interaction order*). All three aggregates of the nexus circulate around and through the site of engagement (see Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2004 for an illustration).

Whenever people enter into social action, they bring along their own experiences, knowledge, and skills, all of which condition and constrain what they can and cannot do in social action. *Historical bodies* (the life experiences, goals, purposes, and unconscious ways of behaving and

thinking, as the Scollons' define it), are formed in particular social spaces and these historical bodies represent the *communicative competence* of people in such social spaces. For example, when a music teacher becomes familiar with the education system, the physical building, the faculty, students, and staff, the district music curriculum, the teaching materials, the music courses and ensembles, the overall infrastructure, and the academic, bureaucratic, and instructional discourse used within the space, they begin to take the shape and form of *music teacher*. Various practices intersect this process of becoming, for example, formal and informal learning procedures as well as particular skill sets and patterns are acquired or encountered. The end result, of course, is that the individual can enter a music classroom and perform the role of teacher within the school setting and be perceived by others as *music teacher*. The individual and others know exactly where the classroom is located, what kinds of activities are expected in that space, and how to perform these activities. The *historical body* of the *music teacher* has therefore been formed through the actual habitual and routine practices performed by the social actors in this space.

What is important about the work of the Scollons is that instead of positioning this process of becoming in relation to the mind, they locate these processes in the body—this is because their work focuses more on the material aspects of discourse. Meaning, what is perceived and acted upon semiotically by other social actors, is not the mind of the individual, but a particular body within a particular space. This body not only talks and thinks, but it also moves, manipulates objects, and displays particular stances (frustration, empathy, kindness, focus, etc.), placing the focus of meaning making within *embodied knowledge*. For example, the processes in which musicians acquire the habitual and routine practices and knowledge of becoming a music teacher (as described above), cannot just be seen as a process of *learning*, but rather a process of *enskillment*—the acquisition and development of cultural knowledge through shared kinesthetic experiences and activities. Thus, the meaning and knowledge of becoming a music teacher is discovered and co-created in the very

process of imitating another individual's movements through standing, speaking, gesturing, looking, singing, playing, conducting, sofleging, etc. It is through these movements that cultural information is conveyed as *embodied cultural knowledge*. Such movements are routinized and practiced within settings of music learning frequently enough that they become immediately recognizable (and *semiotized*) by participants within the shared learning space—inducing particular frames of action and understanding for all social actors engaged within the nexus of practice. Therefore, the notion of the *historical body*, as described by Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon, makes a direct connection between semiotics and embodiment, and shows us as researchers that the bodies of participants in social action are *semiotically enskilled*. That is, social actors produce meaning through movements, gestures, talking, singing, playing, conducting, etc. and this embodied cultural knowledge is organized around normative patterns of conduct in close interaction within a historical space.

Space becomes an important part of the work of conducting a *nexus analysis*. In their book *Discourses in Place*, Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon develop a whole theory of signs within space (geosemiotics), in which they introduce and examine notions such as *emplacement*—the process of meaning making that occurs when/where/how signs are placed within the material world. Emplacement, adds a spatial dimension to semiotic processes. The sign, within a space, engages with the social actor, regulating behavior and creating consequences for action and reaction. Space, from this view, becomes an actor within the process of analysis, not a human actor, but a social actor, imposing its own set of rules, possibilities, and restrictions on the process of communication.

Normative expectations about relationships between signs and particular spaces are developed by social actors. For example, one expects certain signs in certain places—stop signs at intersections or signs for "baggage claim" and "transportation" at an airport. Likewise, we do not expect to see these signs outside of these spaces; for example, we think differently about a stop sign

when we encounter it hanging on a wall in someone's living room. When signs are *in place*, habitual interpretations of such signs are made because the signs fit ecologically into their spatial surroundings. When they are *out of place,* or *transgressive* as the Scollons describe it, a different social signal is transmitted, requiring us to perform additional interpretation work.

We can see through the example of the stop sign at an intersection, a whole array of objects and tools intersect with and regulate the phenomena and activities within a particular space, and these objects and tools and the surrounding phenomena are attached meaning to these spaces by social actors in a way that shapes our expectations of *normalcy* in such space. For example, when we observe a high school band or orchestra rehearsal in the United States we come with a whole set of *normative expectations*. We expect to encounter a space where students are seated with instruments in a semi-circle that faces towards a conducting podium. We expect their behavior to be that of high school students performing band or orchestra repertoire. Now, we can have very flexible expectations with regard to how the high school students may look and what they wear, and we can have flexible expectations with regard to the style and degree of difficulty of the repertoire being performed, but we have more restrictive expectations about the types of objects students would bring into such a rehearsal space (e.g., it would be highly unusual for a student to walk into band or orchestra with a crow-bar; and we would interpret this object/sign as *out of place*). Additionally, we also expect to encounter in a high school band and orchestra rehearsal, particular types of cues, gestures, instructional talk and communication patterns. When all of these things come together in one place, we feel that the rehearsal is proceeding *normally* and that our *normative expectations* have been met. The fact that we have these clear and widely shared expectations about high school band and orchestra rehearsals is something that belongs to the history of musical institutions, and getting acquainted to such histories is part of the processes of *enskillment* discussed earlier. These *normative expectations* contribute to what Irving Goffman calls an *interaction order*. That is, as soon as we enter a

high school band or orchestra rehearsal (and everyone in the space recognizes this place as a band or orchestra rehearsal), the historical bodies and the historical space operate in terms of an *interaction order*.

From this perspective, the historical body is formed and shaped as we get *enskilled* in the use of social and physical spaces, these spaces have histories of use and social actors impact the creation and use of those spaces, but they also impact and create us. As our bodies enter and leave space, they fall into shape (or out of shape). This is the core of the Scollons' work on *discourse in place*, that is, the material world is a spatial world, full of objects, tools, and signs upon which we act semiotically. With this, we see how the three aggregates of the Scollons' model of *nexus analysis* work to form an ethnographic object of inquiry. The *interaction order* is an effect of the dialectics between the *historical body* and the *discourses in place*; it is the conditions of communication created by enskilled bodies operating within a space inscribed with particular signs, symbols, and tools, etc.

Globalization, Ethnography, & Superdiversity

Expanding upon the work of Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon, Jan Blommaert (2005) advocated for a more versatile approach to analyzing discourse:

> . . . one which takes difference and inequality as points of departure, rather than sharedness, closure of contextual spaces, and familiarity with norms, rules, and their consequences. This kind of discourse analysis questions the macro-levels that often invisibly control discourse work, and it questions them actively for they matter at the lowest levels of discourse production and exchange. And this questioning is something we can accomplish by drawing on some of the unique methodological instruments we have developed in our fields: close analysis of situated social events, contextualized at a variety of levels and in ways that allow empirical inspection, and supported by a mature theory of meaning as a social process centered on indexicality. (p. 26)

Significant are Blommaert's acknowledgment that new patterns of communication emerge as part of the process of globalization, and his connection of theory produced on globalization in the social sciences to discursive analysis. Some of the methodological instruments Blommaert draws

upon are: *contextualization*, *uptake*, *indexicality*, and *intertextuality*. These are frames for utterances. They suggest ways in which human beings make sense of and make judgments about talk on the basis of something more than words themselves. These methodological instruments are particularly important in musical settings because actual utterances may be few in comparison to many musical actions that do not take place with words (Talbot, 2013). These frames for utterances also suggest that talk and music may acquire powerful effect as it is used socially, culturally, and politically.

Blommaert (2005, 2010, 2013) takes these methodological instruments and connects their use within concepts of globalization and practices of ethnography. In three of his books: *Discourse*, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*, and *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes*, he offers a series of theoretical principles that are firmly rooted in the field of sociolinguistics. I draw upon all three texts below to condense his theoretical principles into eight points that have import into discursive studies where music learning takes place.

1. Anytime we analyze language-in-society with music-in-society the focus needs to be on what language and music use means to its users and how it matters to people. Language and music operate differently in different environments. In order to understand how language and music work, we need to contextualize it properly within sociolinguistic systems and to establish the relations between language and music use and the particular purposes for which, and conditions under which, it operates. Blommaert (2005) argues, "Every 'model' offered as a blanket explanation should be critically checked against the specifics of the case we are investigating. This goes for language, [music, their] structure, and functions, but also for society, power, history, and so on" (p. 14).

2. "Language [and music] users have repertoires containing different sets of varieties, and these repertoires are the material with which they engage in communication; they will determine what people can do with language [and music]. People, consequently, are not entirely 'free' when they communicate, they are constrained by the range and structure of their repertoires, and the distribution of elements of the repertoires in any society is unequal. Such inequality of repertoires requires us to use a sociolinguistic backdrop for discourse analysis because what people actually produce as discourse will be conditioned by their sociolinguistic background. The notion of 'voice' must be situated at the intersection of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 15.)

3. "In an era of globalization, the threshold of contextualization in discourse analysis or sociolinguistics can no longer be a single society (or even less a single event) but needs to include the relationships between different societies and the effect of these relationships on repertoires

of language users and their potential to construct voice" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 15). Therefore, sociolinguistic systems, where discourse operates, must be perceived as "complex systems characterized by internal and external forces of perpetual change, operating simultaneously and in unpredictable mutual relationships" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 10). Discourse and sociolinguistic systems are always dynamic, never bounded, and never completely and definitively describable either. By the time we have finished our description, we must acknowledge the system will have changed. Thus, an analysis of discourse is always historically situated.

4. "A sociolinguistic system is always a 'system of systems', characterized by different scale levels — the individual is a system, his/her peer group is one, his/her age category another and so on" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 11). We move from the smallest 'microscopic' or 'nanosociolinguistic' level (Parkin 2013), to the highest 'macroscopic' scale level. Centers in a polycentric system typically occupy specific scale levels and operate as a foci of normativity (Blommaert, 2010), that is, of ordered indexicalities (Silverstein, 2003; Blommaert, 2005). The norms valid in a small peer group are different from those operating on the same individuals in a music education context, for instance.

5. Sociolinguistic systems in which discourse operates are characterized by *mobility*. In the constant interaction within and between systems, elements move across centers and scale levels. In such forms of mobility, the characteristics of the elements change. Language and music varieties that have a high value in one place, can lose that value easily by moving into another 'field of force', so to speak—another sociolinguistic system. Concretely, an accent in English that bears middle-class prestige in Nairobi can be turned into a stigmatized immigrant accent in London (see Blommaert, 2010). The same is true for music. For example, performing Balinese Gamelan in Tabanan, Bali may not carry the same value, form, and function when performed in a University setting in Urbana, Illinois (see Talbot, 2012).

6. "The value and function of particular aspects of a sociolinguistic system are the outcome of historical processes of becoming. At the lowest level of language, word meanings are 'conventional', that is 'historically entrenched as meaning x of y'. Historicity creates recognizability, grounded in indexical attributions: I hear x, and I recognize it as conventionally and endemically meaning y" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 11). This also counts for higher order levels such as genres, styles, discourse traditions and other forms of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Blommaert, 2005; Agha, 2007) surrounding objects, tools, cues, etc (Talbot, 2012).

7. In a complex system, we will encounter different historicities and different speeds of change in interaction with each other, collapsing in synchronic moments of occurrence. Long histories— the kind of history that shaped 'English' or 'Jazz' for instance—are blended with shorter histories, such as the one that produced HipHop. Blommaert calls this *layered simultaneity* (Blommaert 2005, p. 126), the fact that in communication, resources, tools, objects, images, sounds, etc. are used that have fundamentally different historicities and therefore fundamentally different indexical loads and meanings. The process of lumping them together, and so eliding the different historicities inscribed in them, he calls *synchronization*. Every synchronic act of communication is a moment in which we synchronize materials that each carry very different historical indexicalities, an effect of the intrinsic polycentricity that characterizes sociolinguistic systems.

8. *Fractal recursivity*—the fact that phenomena occurring on one scale level also resonate at different scale levels (Irvine & Gal, 2000 as referenced by Blommaert, 2013) guides our thinking about complex systems in which discourse operates. "The intrinsic hybridity of utterances is an effect of interactions within a much larger polycentric system. A change at one level also creates effects at other levels. Every instance of change is at least potentially systemic, since changes in one segment of the system have repercussions on other segments of that system. A jurisprudence-driven legal system is a good illustration: a single highly contingent ruling by a judge can change the whole system of legislation on related issues" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 11). This means that microscopic and detailed investigation of cases—ethnography, in other words—is perhaps the most immediately useful methodology for investigating systemic sociolinguistic aspects (see Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Rampton, 2006).

In elucidating these principles, Blommaert shows a departure from mainstream Critical Discourse Analysis and linguistics of the late 20th century (see his critique in *Discourse,* 2005). Like the Scollons, he advocates for a need to understand signs, discourses and language ethnographically and historically and ties their approaches to the idea of complexity. Linking to the idea of *superdiversity (*Vertovek,2007), Blommaert makes a case for complexity as an empirical feature of our research. Superdiverse spaces, such as the ones found in cosmopolitan, global, cross-cultural, or online music learning spaces, can be seen as dynamic and indeterminate systems in which a variety of forces interact and very different modes of communication, music, and change are observed. Blommaert describes these environments as *polycentric* and *multifiliar*—that is, different threads simultaneously develop and communicate meaning within a broader logic of a system. This logic is *infrastructural.* These different infrastructures are tailored towards the needs of the different groups who form a *polycentric* whole. These infrastructures are not isolated and separate units, but interact across the boundaries of such groups. As Blommaert (2013) points out, "The end result is a particular form of order: an unstable, evolving and always *unfinished* order, characterized by nonlinear and apparently *chaotic* paths of ordering, randomly determined moments of change creating a high level of unpredictability to the social dynamics we observe" (p. 107). Complexity is the order of superdiversity, and if we intend to address superdiversity as researchers, we have to, as

Blommaert says, "draw away from established, modernist images of society and social process" (108).

Drawing from the methodological perspectives of Jan Blommaert and Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon, we can argue that our music learning environments are complex sociolinguistic systems that require a mixture of deep ethnographic immersion. As researchers, approaches like those proposed above, offer a broad and longitudinal picture of an entire sociolinguistic system, while simultaneously developing close analytic work of the dynamic, polycentric, and *chaotic*, structures operating within. Their work suggests a paradigmatic shift is needed in our approaches for explaining phenomena in music education. It highlights a need to see the *layered simultaneity* and *nexuses* of complex and *synchronized* histories within and around our music learning settings. If we wish to describe the music learning environment as a sociolinguistic system (and I think a strong case in this chapter has been made for doing so), then we must see the complexities within this system. Doing so, requires developing a robust toolkit for music education research. By drawing upon the tools presented by Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon and Jan Blommaert and others, we can better analyze how we position and are positioned as part of larger groups and practices operating within multiple layers of social, cultural, and historical context. In this way, we can better understand our phenomena, what is happening throughout our work as musicians and teachers, and advocate for more equitable practices and inclusive spaces where music learning takes place.

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