

# *Applied Ethnomusicology: The Benefits of Approaching Music as a Heart Language*

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## **Abstract**

Music is an important part of every culture and is often inseparable from language. Throughout history oral societies have used music as a powerful means of communication. A culture's music styles often provide solidarity and a sense of identity within that culture. The outside influences of modern technology, media, and formal education can greatly effect the music of minority language groups. Those influences may diminish or accentuate the music of a particular language group depending on how they are responded to by various communities within that language group.

In this article we will explore the power that indigenous music has as a heart-language and as a means of communication. We will also explore the indigenous use of music as a potent memory aid and instructional vehicle. Ethnomusicology has several parallels to linguistics and the two fields of study can work together in reviving endangered languages. We will suggest approaches for using culturally relevant music as a primary tool for language and culture revitalization through encouraging mother-tongue speakers to research the music as used by their own language group.

*"Music is a universal need but music is not an international language. It consists of a whole series of equally logical but different systems."*

*(Quote from William P. Malm's 2001 Charles Seeger Lecture, delivered on October 27, 2001 at the 46<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Society of Ethnomusicology in Detroit, Michigan.)*

Our work is in the area of Applied Ethnomusicology. The field of ethnomusicology has predominantly focused on outsiders researching and archiving cultural art forms, particularly those involving music. In our work, however, we are interested in more than preserving music as an artifact. We desire to encourage members of a culture to use their creative process within the changing environment of formal education, modern technology, and dominant cultural influences.

We seek to encourage language groups to make wise choices about these rapidly occurring changes so that they can use what is becoming available to them for the purpose of researching their own music and continuing to create using their own cultural art forms. We then assist them in using the appropriate forms in the areas of community development, including: literacy development, health promotion, community projects, and cultural promotion.

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## ● Music and Language

Language and music are found in every culture, and are very inter-related. Within a culture, each greatly affects the other. Among indigenous cultures of Asia, it is often difficult to separate the two, especially among more oral cultures. Oral traditions already use music in four powerful ways. They use music to communicate. They use music to reinforce cultural identity. They use music to teach or instruct members of their community. They use music to assist them in retaining and passing on large amounts of information.

Although music functions in an important role in most cultures, it is likely to not be included in language development policies or practices. This may be due to the extra amount of energy one might feel is needed in order to explore some of the various cultural elements, such as music, and find ways to appropriately and effectively use them in a program.

We have seen, in our ten years of working in Asia, that music and other cultural art forms can effectively be included as a part of language development, language revitalization, and multilingual education among minority communities. One of the main benefits we have seen is the mother-tongue speakers' emotional connection with the projects and their feeling of ownership of the projects when traditional art forms are included. This has repeatedly been

shown to bring unity among not only the project members, but also between other members of the community.

## ● Music as a Heart Language

Music, like language, is a basic human need. For most indigenous cultures music often functions as an important means of communication. Because of this, it is often difficult to separate music from language. Language influences the music and the music influences the language. These two communication tools are often tightly wound together within many traditional cultures. Not only does music communicate through words, but it also helps people transcend everyday speech. Music can go beyond words, as a means of expressing what is in the heart.

A person's cultural identity is often deeply connected with their music. If we can begin to understand the music that is important to another we can begin to understand their hearts. If we take the time and effort, music can be a way to build relationships with others and it can be an open door into their lives. We have consistently seen the excitement on people's faces as they share with us about their music and see that we greatly value it. It may have been a long time, if ever, since anyone has shown an interest in music that is relevant to them.

However, some significant cultural barriers may need to be overcome for the outsider to begin to understand another group's music. Sound, function and even concepts about music may vary greatly from culture to culture. The purposes and uses of music in popular culture stand in even greater contrast to those of oral cultures. Under the influence of modern globalization people tend to conceptualize music more as something extra. Music usually functions as entertainment, as background sound, and as business. Music, then, becomes something to be consumed as opposed to an expression from the heart.

### ● Music Vocabulary

It is difficult to describe music in any language. Since music is meant to give expression beyond mere words, it is often challenging for those within any given culture to use words to describe or discuss their music. Looking at a music critic's review of a new music recording one can sometimes see attempts to describe the songs in flowery detail. But, these words always fall short of helping a new listener know what the music will sound like or whether it will be meaningful to them.

Many cultures do not have one broad word for music, but have many specifically defining terms. Among most Mon-Khmer language groups the words used for talking about music are often

verbs, as opposed to the way we have used the term "music" as a noun in this article. Music is conceptualized in the action or the "doing". It is not seen as an object or as passive behavior, but is generally viewed as an active, integrated part of cultural behavior. Music terms function as verbs, perhaps, because the speakers do not describe music making as an abstract concept but rather as a practical reality of life.

Each culture may think very differently about music. Each culture will have their own way of talking about their own music within their own language. The words used to identify songs, song types, dances, instruments, celebrations, ceremonies, etc. are all specific to the language and the function of the art forms within that language. Even if people have words to identify or describe songs, these terms often may not translate well. This can be a barrier to gaining an insider's view of music within any given culture.

Another barrier that can arise when talking about music is the difficulty in identifying where language stops and music begins. Many cultures will say that they do not have music. This is often because they not only have their own language vocabulary for music (which often does not match up with the national culture's words or forms), but also because they may not conceptualize some of their musical expressions as being defined as "music". When one is seeking this information from those in a language

group it is helpful to ask them to identify sounds (and their names, descriptions, and functions) outside of normal, everyday speech. This usually opens the door for the identification of a broad variety of song styles within their cultural context.

“Khrap Sepha”, a traditional Thai form of expression, which could be inadequately described by English speakers as “chanting”, is a valuable art form. Although its use has decreased dramatically within Thai culture, this chant-like style is still identified as uniquely Thai by Thais. In a discussion about music, it could be easily overlooked as an art form used for communication if one did not search for it, since Thais do not identify it as “song” or “music”.

### ● Music as a Means of Communication

Music communicates in two main areas. The first is the text, which communicates lexical meaning. The words of a song are often placed in a special form, often poetic. This not only allows for a natural rhythmical flow in the language, but usually is found to be a more powerful emotional medium for the lexical communication to take place. One group from Papua New Guinea heard a story that was translated into their language. They felt it was a good story. But, when that story was put in poetic form one of the elders in the village jumped up and said, “Before it was a good story, but now it is spoken with power!”

The second way that music communicates is through the sounds, which could include melody, rhythm, instruments, and more. These sounds carry memories and associations with experiences. If, for example, you were to hear the melody of the song “Happy Birthday”, you would probably be able to identify the song immediately. You have an association with the song. Even though you do not hear the words, you know the context for its use. These associations and memories are related closely to song melodies and carry the meaning from our minds into our hearts.

Sounds in music also carry feelings. The song “Happy Birthday” may not bring up deep feelings for you, but for some people it may stir up strong feelings. The memories may be joyful (celebrating their past birthday with dear friends) or sad memories (turning a year older this past year might have been painful). The feelings we have with songs can, upon hearing one, stir in us tears or laughter. That is the power of this type of heart-sound.

Music is often set in a social or emotional context. We hear the song “Here Comes the Bride” and we may immediately think of a wedding. It may be a wedding of which we were a part or of someone else’s celebration. Many songs carry social or emotional connections for us with a context that has formed or influenced our lives in some way. Music is used most effectively when

one knows what types of feelings it will communicate when used in a particular social context.

Some cultures also use sound to communicate through what is called speech surrogates. Speech surrogates are instruments or vocal sounds that function as a form of communication within the society. Sometimes these sounds are understood by all members in the society and sometimes they function as a secret communication form between selected subcultures. The Hmong use the jaws harp as a speech surrogate. Young lovers communicate secret messages to each other by playing what they want to say on the jaws harp. The jaws harp carries the intonation, language tone, and vowel sounds in such a way that the message can be understood through the medium of sound.

### ● Music: a Memory Aid and an Instructional Vehicle

Music has been used by cultures for centuries to disseminate information from generation to generation. Large amounts of information have been retained. Often this information is held only in peoples' memories without written or recorded memory aid devices. The resource of songs and poems, then, become the culture's library, holding important cultural information for the entire group.

There are many different types of information that can be passed on through songs. The history of a people-group, for example, can be retained in song forms. The Hmong, throughout the world, have very long historical songs, which trace their migration from China. These songs are intended to help the spirits of people who die to find their way back to their ancestral home. Some of these songs recount historical world events, such as the creation of people, a worldwide flood, and the dispersion of languages throughout the world. The Hmong historical accounts, like many other minority cultures, were passed on orally with no written form and are amazingly similar to the histories retained by other language groups.

The Garwali of India have historical songs that last six hours in length. Many other groups in India and Pakistan have epic historic songs that last all night long. Large amounts of detailed information are passed on in these forms, emphasizing not only the history of each group, but also the cultural identity that is felt by the group members. This reinforcing of cultural identity can also bring a feeling of unity to those within the cultural group.

Other elements that are held in song are the beliefs or values of a culture. Information about the culture itself can also be held within songs. Some language groups have songs of prophecy, telling of things to come in the future. The Sgaw

Karen of Southeast Asia have many songs that can be traced back for centuries which predicted events such as the invention of the telephone, walking on the moon, and more.

Feelings are often expressed through the words of a song in a way that would not be socially acceptable through words alone. Many groups with whom we've worked cannot confront each other directly with their feelings. So, if members of their culture are angry at one another, they do not speak of it. One group in Southeast Asia said that if they are angry with someone in their community, they will go and sing outside of the person's home. They will put their words of accusation into a blaming melody, which is used specifically for these types of occasions. In this way, they will freely express their frustrations. Sometimes the person on the receiving end of this song serenade will respond with their angry defense. But, most often, the song brings shame on the recipient and the conflict is resolved after the song is sung.

Songs are sometimes used to give instruction or to teach. In South Asia some groups use songs to give instructions as to how to catch fish, harvest rice, cook chapattis, and gather certain plants from the mountains. Some groups may use songs to teach information about which they cannot speak. One language group in South Asia would find it inappropriate to speak the wedding night instructions to a bride-to-be. But, the day before her wedding, the older women gather and

sing the instructions in great detail to her so she will be well prepared. The young bride easily retains these wedding night instructions because they are combining a familiar traditional song form and poetic form to assist her in holding onto the new information.

### ● How Does Music Relate to Linguistics?

Music, like language, is a system. Just like language, music can be broken down, analyzed, and reconstructed to express new musical thoughts and ideas in a clear, familiar structure. There is not an exact correlation between linguistic analysis and music analysis. But, there are some striking similarities.

For music analysis, we begin with a transcription of the sounds we hear. Much like the etic approach of using IPA to write down the sound elements one hears in the spoken language, so also musical sounds can be documented through etic ears.

After the pitches, their order, and the rhythmic feel of the song are documented, an "inter-tonetic" assessment of the intervals or pitches can be done. This is much like a phonetic description. We can then identify the contrasting units. After this etic assessment is done, field checking can be pursued in order to understand how well we have heard the pitches and how accurately we have assessed them to be emic within the culture. Through this checking we

can establish identification of “inter-tonemic” segments (like phonemes in linguistics), a pitch inventory (like an alphabet or orthography development), tonal centers, motifs (like phonology), grammatical structure – the rules for pitch or interval progression – (like lexical grammar, phrasing), rhythmic structure (like determining syllable timed languages or stress timed languages), and form (like discourse and genre or style).

From these assessments we could be able to understand the musical structure well enough to generate new musical thoughts in song. This ability is much like someone learning a new language. The more they study and understand elements of the language, the more they are able to begin to put together new thoughts within the language. After new songs are generated in the analyzed music style (s), the songs are then checked to see how accurate the analysis has been and how well generation has evolved from it.

### ● How Can Ethnomusicology Be Applied to Linguistics?

Ethnomusicology can assist linguists in reviving endangered languages. Showing an interest in the music of a culture can assist in increasing language, music, and cultural esteem. These three areas are often tightly wrapped together. Showing the value of the culture’s art forms can spark renewed interest and internal

value of other important elements within the culture. We have seen repeatedly an increase in language value when the cultural art forms of a language group are esteemed and being pursued by people from the culture.

Music and song text analysis can be very helpful to linguists. There are many language correlations that occur in songs. For example, tones of a language often correlate in some way to the music. These correlations vary from language to language and music system to music system. The Hmong choose melodic pitches depending on the lexical tone of the syllable. The singing within one tonal dialect of the Khmu language is helpful for knowing the emically perceived tone of “half-syllables” due to the high correlation of melodic pitches and speech tone levels. The tones of these “half-syllables” are indistinguishable in spoken words. The Bouyei of Southern China appear to have correlations between speech tones and the dynamic level (volume) of sung words as opposed to singing similar pitch levels.

Songs may have special words that communicate feelings that are not normally expressed in everyday speech. As mentioned earlier, many cultures can sing things that are taboo to speak to one another. Many cultures do not speak about love for a man and a woman. Yet there are songs that are sung between lovers that communicate powerfully about their passion for

each other. The words in these songs would not be appropriate in regular speech, but sung, they are the channel for love to flow.

Not only is speaking about certain topics considered rude or inappropriate, in some areas of the world it is dangerous to speak of these things. In South Asia, Buddhists and Christians can sing about aspects of their religions. They, however, cannot say these things without being cast out of the community or, in some areas, even killed.

Another area where music can be of assistance to linguists is in the area of poetic form. Studying and understanding the structure of the poetic forms that are used within a language can lend insight into various poetic structures as well as poetic function in the language.

Understanding the words in songs can be helpful for understanding vocabulary used in various domains in the language. Also, vocabulary words in songs may be valuable additions to a dictionary. Sometimes song words are specialized and only found in this context, but they are still a valuable part of the language word corpus.

Insights into world view can be gained by exploring the art forms of a culture. Within the songs texts, the dances, the contexts for songs, the passing on of the creative process, and more, the wealth of a culture is held. These all assist in helping the linguist to understand the cultural overlay that moves in and around the language.

## ● How Can Ethnomusicology Be Applied to Assist Minority Language Groups?

As we stated previously, we desire to look beyond assisting groups in preserving music as an artifact. Our desire is to help them use their creative process within the changing environment of formal education, modern technology, and dominant cultural influences. We encourage community members to work together to explore changes that are happening in their society that may be causing their traditional music to disappear. They can then begin to make choices about how they can use those changes to preserve, promote, and revitalize their own culture. It is often helpful for people to see that they cannot only be multi-lingual but also multi-musical as they learn to create in more than one music system. In this way they can work within the larger national or international society while maintaining their own cultural identities.

## ● Revitalization

When cultural art forms and the cultural creative process are affirmed, there can be excitement generated within the language community. Many language groups, while exploring the creative process of their traditional art forms have begun composing new songs about the value of their language and culture. They have a vision to use these songs in community programs as well as for audio distribution in order to promote the value of their culture.

One valuable way to pursue the promotion of language and cultural art forms is to interest mother-tongue speakers to do cultural research of their own language communities. We encourage them to research their own music and art forms, giving them research methods to assist them as they go through the process. This, we have found, is the strongest method for encouraging and sustaining revitalization in reference to traditional music and art forms. When mother-tongue speakers are involved in understanding their own culture and trying to engage in the renewal of their cultural creative process, they function as catalysts for others in the community. As these mother-tongue speakers communicate to others the unique and valuable portions of their own culture, an increased esteem of the culture usually generates through a growing number in the community. These self-researchers, as insiders, have the ability to engage the interest of others within their language group and together, to keep the fire of revitalization burning.

One consistent pattern we see in many cultures is that once formal education and/or electronic media (such as television, radio, karaoke, and mass produced tapes and CDs) have entered an area, the traditional art forms of a language group may begin to fade. Traditional ways of passing on songs, dances, and instrumental skills can fade. These additions from outside the culture can halt the natural process of

education within the community for passing on traditional art forms to younger generations.

For example, the children may have accompanied parents to the fields during the day and learned a repertoire of songs for planting, harvesting, fishing, or expressing spontaneous observations about the day. Now, the children's days may be filled with sitting in a classroom and learning about the traditions of the larger, national culture, as opposed to their own cultural roots.

Previously, family or community members may have sat together in the evenings, sharing stories and singing songs. With the introduction of television and other media, this former social time and event for passing on traditional art forms may have been replaced by evening media-fests. When these traditional ways of passing on cultural information and art forms are lost, the ability of the younger generations to know their traditions may also be lost.

Even if the younger generations have some sporadic exposure to their traditions, they may not have enough traditional education opportunities to help them maintain the creative process needed to sustain their cultural art forms, such as the creation of new songs in traditional styles. As community members see the reality of this loss, many individuals become interested in finding ways to re-enter their traditional education patterns again. They seek to find appropriate ways to move through the incoming external influences

without sacrificing their traditional culture. These motivated insiders often become self-researchers for their community.

Self-research can also provide foundational materials for understanding how music has traditionally functioned and communicated within their culture. This research information can also provide many insights for the community members as they make decisions about ways in which to effectively preserve valued parts of their culture. This information can then be used by those in the community to assess ways that new influences and innovations entering the culture can appropriately be filtered out of or into the culture. Together, the community can decide how they will use their familiar cultural methods of communicating to address desired new innovations or changes within their culture.

Available technology can either draw young people away from cultural knowledge or it can be used to help preserve it and promote it. We have seen rural young people begin to use tape recorders, video cameras, and computers to record and document valuable cultural data. Some people have begun making karaoke videos of their cultural music, which can be used to promote the culture. Karaoke or music videos can even aid in literacy as people read the lyrics to songs in their own language as the words are being sung. We have seen great creativity as young people think through ways to use the available technology to

promote their culture. One person even suggested using their traditional songs as "ring tones" on their cell phones.

### ● Self-Research and Communication Model: (Figures 1 & 2)

We have developed a simplified model to assist groups in researching, writing about, and promoting the music of their culture. By simplified, we mean that it is an attempt to include many complex factors and research that could continue, for any one part of the model, for many years. It is not our intention that this model be applied prescriptively but rather it should be explored ethnographically. Both for the "outsiders" (person(s) who might present the concept) and for "insiders" (who from within the culture would participate in the endeavor) this model is only a guide and a reminder of important factors to consider.

The information needs to be gained in culturally appropriate ways that would draw out authentic data from insider experts. As the self-research develops, groups can begin to consider ways to communicate new ideas and information using their music through the development of new songs. We have seen positive results from using this model and it is our hope and desire that cultural revitalization will be more likely to occur from its application.

We have seen the use of this model motivate multi-lingual young people, in particular, to become “multi-musical” as well. They come to realize that they do not have to give up learning about the music that they are exposed to by outside influences in order to learn more about the traditional music of their culture or vice versa. We have also seen people become more interested in their language and culture as a result of learning more about their music and using it to communicate new information. We suspect that the increased interest in their language is due to what we have been saying, that music and language are inter-related and music is an important part of cultural identity.

### ● Self-Research: (Figure 1)

First, we seek to find people who would like to learn more about their traditional cultural art forms. Then, we encourage these “insiders” to explore the different types of people that may exist within subcultures within their overall language group. All types of **people** should be considered—old, young, urban, rural, rich, poor, formally educated, various casts, various religions, priests, various regions or countries, music specialists, non-musicians, etc. The types of subcultures will vary depending on the particular language group and where they are located.

Next, we have these self-researchers explore the **types and/or styles of music** that are

used by the various subcultures. Older rural people, for example, are the most likely to remember or most likely to still be using traditional music types, such as; lullabies, festival songs, courting songs, history songs, even various poetic styles, etc. Formally educated people may be more familiar with various national style songs. Young urban people may use various types of “Pop” styles.

Lastly, we suggest researching the **cultural contexts** of the various types of music used by the various subcultures. Questions can be asked about each type of song so that important aspects of the context can be described and considered. A simple list consisting of, **who, what, where, when, how, and why** can be expanded to describe such things as: **Who** typically performs this style of music (men, women, either, both, groups, anyone, etc.)? **Who** is it performed for (child, spirit, potential mate, community, self, etc.)? **What** instruments are used? **What** else is usually happening when this style is performed (ceremony, planting, hunting, dancing, wedding, etc.)? **Where** is it usually performed (in the home, village gathering, on a stage, in the forest or fields, anywhere, etc.)? **When** is it usually performed (time of day, time of year, occasion, anytime, for how long, etc.)? **How** is it performed (formally, spontaneously, techniques, leading of a group, mood, rituals, body movements, etc.)? **How** do people learn/teach this

song style? **How** do people compose new songs in this style? **Why** is it being performed (purpose, benefits, expectations, etc)?

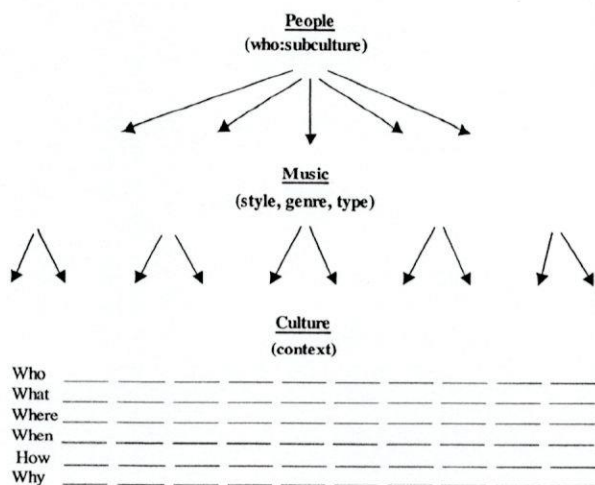


Figure 1

## ● Using Music to Communicate in New Ways: (Figure 2)

Using this model we have been able to assist people in thinking through how to have appropriate songs composed that will best communicate about literacy, community development, revitalization, or any relevant topic for the community. As they think through which people they most want to reach with this communication, what types of styles of songs to use, and what context would be best for presenting those songs, new songs can be composed that will meaningfully reach the hearts and minds of people from the various subcultures of their language group.

Creativity along with deep cultural understanding is essential in applying this model. As with the research portion, it is not our intention that this model be applied in a formulaic manner but rather the model should depend mostly on the

creativity of the composer (s), musicians, and development workers. Fortunately, attempts by outsiders to manipulate people through their music are most likely to fail (and historically have failed) due to the lack of deep cultural understanding and lack of true creativity coming from within the culture.

To create new songs that are natural to the particular culture or subculture, the composer must either be from that culture or subculture or they need to learn the new or traditional music system much as one would learn a new language. Learning a new music system would, of course, take a lot of talent, time, and effort. It is often easier to find someone who does know how to compose in the music of that particular subculture and work with them to compose a new song that will communicate the new information. This approach has the added benefit of making sure that a composer believes in the value of communicating the new information, thus being more likely that the song will meet a felt need of that particular subculture.

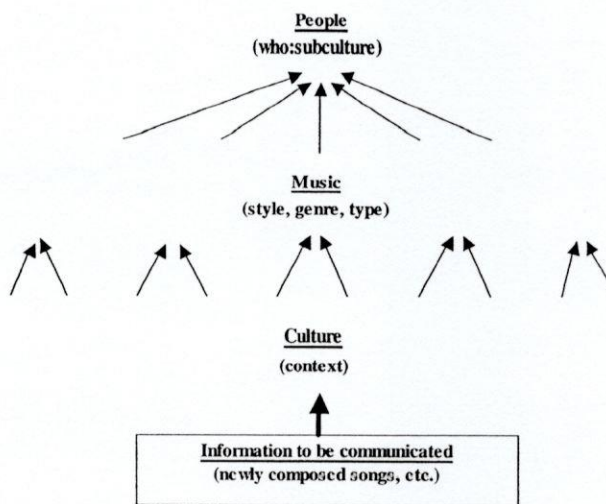


Figure 2

## ● Two Important Principles to Remember When Applying Ethnomusicology

As discussed earlier, music sends meaning through two channels: text and sound. This information becomes the foundation for two important principles which can be used whenever introducing songs for use in a community development program. The first principle is to use the mother-tongue language within songs. It is easy for many groups to shift towards national language or a language they see as more prestigious. Often one can hear songs emerging in the community with one of these more dominant languages.

Some literacy programs, for example, although working on developing literacy in the mother-tongue language, use songs in other more dominant languages. This gives a confusing message to the students. When the mother-tongue language is used, faster learning and application takes place, not to mention the side benefit of raised cultural esteem and reinforcing of group identity.

The second principle is to use familiar and meaningful music and song styles. Foreign songs or art forms are just that – foreign. Their use often introduces a new community idea as foreign. We have seen some groups who do not feel that a community development program is their own because they see it coming through a foreign medium or from a foreign source. If the song

styles are familiar and meaningful, this barrier can be broken down.

For each culture or subculture these forms and styles will vary. It can take time to research and discover the heart-music styles of the various cultures or subcultures. Still, the effort and time this takes is valuable, as the use of the familiar and meaningful music medium allows the language to flow naturally. This is vital for a good, solid bridge to help people journey into a new frontier of community development.

We also include in our programs, exploring other meaningful art forms. These would include traditional dance, drama, visual arts, etc. Involving skilled community members (e.g. musicians, composers, artists, and dancers) is very important. These experts can serve as resources for using art forms within a community development program.

One group in Southeast Asia has decided to incorporate visits from these community resource people into their literacy program curriculum. These experts teach the young people in the literacy program traditional dances, traditional songs, information about the traditional instruments, and more. The students are learning how to build and play traditional instruments, how to dance and sing in their cultural tradition, and how to create new songs and poems in their traditional poetic forms. These different topics, with the assistance of these experts, have been

written into their literacy books in various forms. So, the students have the written information alongside of what they are learning orally. Both are used to reinforce the other in this process of learning more about their traditional culture.

When songs and art forms that are used in a community development program come from within the culture or subculture, it allows for a familiar medium which functions as a solid bridge into a new concept or experience. With this approach, clearer communication will take place, since the language and medium for conveying the language are from within the culture. This results in not only greater understanding of the materials, but can result in greater motivation of participants as well.

### ● **How Can Music Be Used in a Community Development Program in Parallel with the Way That the Culture Has Used Music?**

Some community development programs, like literacy, for example, may already use music to create a fun atmosphere, attract people to literacy classes, encourage socialization and participation, and to teach some information. But music has the potential to be used in even more effective ways within a literacy program.

Music, when utilized for various types of community development programs in culturally meaningful ways, can have a powerful impact within the community. As mentioned earlier, oral

traditions already use music in four ways: to communicate, to reinforce cultural identity, to teach or instruct, and to retain and pass on large amounts of information. They can access these same purposes and methods that they have used for centuries; reinforcing the new concepts and materials that are being taught, but using a natural, familiar medium for the communication of these new ideas and approaches.

In this way, those involved in community development programs can build a bridge from the traditional way of passing on information to a new idea of holding information in books – literacy. When using the appropriate music styles and forms, this can be an easy pathway for people to journey across. Innovations are not as frightening or overwhelming, but comfortable and familiar.

In the same way, language groups can use their familiar ways of passing on information to introduce other new innovations. In the area of community development, use of traditional art forms can help the community unite and progress in areas of felt need and modernization, without abandoning their traditional culture.

Health issues can be addressed in song, dance, and drama in many cultures. In one group in Cambodia, they had developed various types of written and instructional material about specific health care issues. They had booklets and teaching materials. Some of these materials, however, were

never distributed. The mother-tongue teachers who developed the materials would avoid teaching on some of the topics.

An NGO organization asked us to work with the mother-tongue speakers to look together at ways they could use some of their cultural art forms to communicate some of this health information. In a group discussion, the mother-tongue speakers listed many health topics that they said they would like to address in song. These topics included "AIDS." As they were discussing this issue together, the director of the NGO said, "I don't think they'll compose a song about AIDS. They developed AIDS educational material over a year ago and the mother-tongue speakers have not been willing to discuss any of it with the folks in their villages." We quietly commented that often sensitive topics like this cannot be discussed in words, but may sometimes be addressed in songs.

During the workshop, the first topic the teachers in this language group selected to address in song was "AIDS." They composed a very creative song about the issues connected to AIDS. "When people hear this," they said, "they will understand about the dangers of AIDS, about the issues connected to it, and about how to prevent the disease." These workshop participants were pleased with their creation and felt that it would be very well received by the people in the villages. Now, they have an appropriate medium for communicating about this deadly disease.

In the same way, we can use the traditional ways of passing on information to introduce other new innovations. In the area of community development, use of traditional art forms can help the community unite and progress in areas of felt need and modernization, without abandoning their traditional culture. One group we met with in South Asia decided to address some of the social issues within their communities. They began composing songs about young girls from their language group being sold into prostitution, the challenges of being deceived by others, and more. After composing a repertoire of songs, they involved several professional musicians from their language group in making an audio recording of these songs. They, as a minority group, are the first ones to be recognized nationally on the radio within their country. One of the composers said to us, "I wanted to address some of the social issues of my people, to warn them of the dangers that are growing in our communities. But, I couldn't afford an advertisement on the radio. So, I write songs about these dangers and the radio station enjoys playing them. And they play them for free!" Many people outside the minority group appreciate the song styles of this particular language group. It has become popular, and also carries a powerful message to those within the traditional language.

## Summary

Using appropriate culturally relevant art forms in a community development program can be stimulating for participants and encouraging to others in the community as well. Use of songs and other art forms allow for motivating and fun learning. They also allow for meaningful communication to take place if these forms are not foreign to the participants. These familiar and meaningful forms of communication can serve as a sturdy bridge for the journey into the new realm of development within the community.

Using songs, dances, and art can provide an easily repetitive medium that prevents boredom and yet encourages the opportunity to instill new concepts, which can be retained easily. Use of art forms also allows for participatory learning.

Involving community members in developing appropriate ways to present these art forms is vital. By encouraging them to research their traditional culture and to develop appropriate mediums for passing on the new innovations within their community context can allow for a meaningful presentation of the new concepts. Also, these concepts will be more easily retained through this channel of communication. Above all, using these familiar art forms as a bridge into new ideas can validate the culture as well as the language. Increased cultural esteem can allow the community to feel motivated to move ahead towards new areas of development. But, they do not need to abandon what has been meaningful and valuable to them

traditionally. They can access their traditional culture in order to move into the new innovations brushing up against their world. And both can be maintained and retained, and even more than this, both can be developed for continued new uses in the future.

## Appendix A

### Sociomusical Questionnaire

The following skeletal sets of questions are meant to be a guide for organizing and gathering information about the music in a culture. The questions are usually not asked directly, but information should be acquired by culturally appropriate means. Information gathered in all of the following areas can be helpful.

What are the terms used in your culture for sounds outside of normal speech?

What are the different song styles or song categories in your culture? (lullabies, courting, wedding, religious, funeral, youth, etc.)

What do each of these song styles/categories achieve or mean to people (e.g., helping children go to sleep, encouraging youth to dance, etc.)?

Who typically performs this style of music (men, women, either, both, groups, anyone, etc.)?

Who is it performed for (child, spirit, potential mate, community, self, etc.)?

What instruments are used?

What events are happening when this song are performed (e.g., ceremony, planting, hunting, dancing, wedding, etc)?

Where is the song usually performed (e.g., in the home, village gathering, on a stage, in the forest or fields, anywhere, etc)?

When is it usually performed (e.g., time of day, time of year, occasion, anytime, for how long, etc)?

How is it performed (formally, spontaneously, techniques, leading of a group, mood, rituals, body movements, etc.)?

How do people learn/teach this song style?

How do people compose new songs in this style?

Why is it performed (purpose, benefits, expectations, etc)?

Which song styles or genres are seen as your own traditional songs?

What are the various musical instruments in your culture?

Who makes these instruments?

Who plays them?

When and where are they used?

Which musical instruments are attractive to listen to? Which subculture of people in your culture enjoy these instruments?

How are new songs composed?

Who composes songs?

Who can compose songs?

What dances are in your culture?

Who dances them?

When are they danced (for what occasions)?

What types of drama do you have in your culture?

Who acts in them?

Are songs sung or played during them?

When are the dramas performed?

What are the purposes or benefits of these dramas? (e.g., people enjoy them because they are fun, people learn values from watching them, etc.)

In years past, how are each of these cultural art forms passed on through the community and through generations?

Currently, does the younger generation like to learn the traditional musical instruments, songs, and dances? Do those who play traditional instruments, sing, and/or dance expect the younger people to learn? How would the experts in these art forms currently envision their skills being passed on?

