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Intercultural Musicking - Portraits and Narratives of Klezmer Ensemble Performance



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Abstract

This article focuses on one example of intercultural musicking (IcM) - when mostly non-Jewish music students experience unfamiliar methods to learn to perform *klezmer* which for most of them is an unfamiliar music culture - and the value later attached to this experience. We briefly introduce klezmer as a music culture and our teaching of it. We then describe the combination of visual and narrative methods - also unfamiliar to participants - which we used to explore former students' experience of performing klezmer. We discuss illustrative data from these ensemble alumni. We review our learning from this alumni-based practice-evaluation study regarding student development of transmusicality and intercultural personhood. We conclude with our insights into the use of visual and narrative methods in exploring the value of intercultural music education.

Keywords: Arts methods; intercultural musicking; intercultural personhood; klezmer ensemble performance; transmusicality

Introduction

The term *intercultural musicking* (IcM) builds on a process-oriented understanding of music as an activity, as something that happens whenever, and however, people are involved in musical activity, be that through performing, listening, rehearsing, practising, composing, dancing, and so on (Small, 1998, p. 9). Such activities become intercultural for us whenever they involve a meaningful encounter with 'Otherness', e.g. engagement with a less familiar (musical) culture and/or with individuals from differing backgrounds. Other writers use similar terms - for example, Crooke et al., (2024, p. 24) use

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the term *intercultural music engagement* for the “process whereby people come into contact with cultures other than their own through participating in a musical act”. Through its ‘engagement’ element, their term is similarly process-based, and their thinking is, like ours, anchored by Small’s perspective but the music/musicking contrast central to our understanding is less foregrounded in their term.

In this article, we are concerned with the educational potential and longer-term value of IcM in an undergraduate module taught in a UK university music department. Through this module, ourⁱ music students develop as ensemble performers of a music culture (outlined below) new to most of them. We also use a particular approach to teaching and learning (Fay, Mawson & Bithell, 2022) and thus students engage with a partly unfamiliar pedagogy as well as an unfamiliar music culture. In seeking to evaluate the value that alumni attach to these IcM learning and performing experiences, we use data generation methods also unfamiliar to them.

The module involves performances within the familiar music department setting but also beyond it in the local community. This gives rise to unusual student encounters with individuals associated with the music culture concerned. Many of our music students experience the multicultural city in a limited way – they live and study within a narrow strip of the city, mixing largely with other students. They are a much more culturally homogeneous group than the university as whole or as the general population of the city. Given these demographics, their ensemble performance studies provide an opportunity for intercultural contact through which, we hope, their (inter)cultural awareness may develop. Equally, for the communities with which the students engage, significant contact with the university is not common. Thus, the intercultural benefits are potentially bi-lateral.

We have many curiosities about this music education context and the value later attached to it by the students participating in it. What sense do they subsequently make of their ensemble performance encounter with a musical ‘Other’? And with the partly unfamiliar pedagogy? As alumni, how do they accommodate their new ensemble performance experiences into their developing musicianship? What sense do they make of the experience of performing for audiences who, in some ways, are a cultural ‘Other’? How do they situate their playing within and beyond the university in a musically- and culturally informed manner? And as appropriate for their twenty-first century UK performance context? How do they navigate the tensions between cultural appropriation and cultural translation?

Such curiosities prompted our exploratory study which we hoped would shed light on some of them. This study combined unfamiliar (to the alumni concerned) visual creative arts methods with narrative discussion (Huang, 2022) to enable us to explore the meaning and value these former students attached to their unfamiliar ensemble performance experience. Further curiosities arise from this: What do these methods offer? And what can we learn from the students’ visual and narrativised sense-making?

In the discussion below, we set out our understanding of the music culture concerned, namely *klezmer*, and then present our teaching context for it, reporting also the feedback on it which has spurred our curiosities. Next, we introduce the study we undertook with our alumni and then illustrate this with sample data. This leads to a discussion of insights gained vis-à-vis the student experience of IcM, the value they subsequently attach to it, their experience of unfamiliar pedagogical practices and performance opportunities, and the potential of using unfamiliar research methods to explore such areas.

ⁱ The first author co-founded the university’s klezmer ensemble, co-teaches the klezmer ensemble performance module, and collaboratively undertook the practice-evaluation research reported here with the second author who is an intercultural specialist and arts-based researcher.

Klezmer & Klezmer Ensemble Performance Teaching

Klezmer

The term *klezmer* - from the Hebrew כלי-זמר / *klei zemer*, or “vessel of song” - originally referred to the musician but has come to mean the music culture that was, historically, used in weddings and other social occasions in the mostly Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi Jewish communities in Eastern Europe (Sapoznik, 1999; Slobin, 2000, 2002; Netsky, 2015; Feldman, 2016). Building on these roots, klezmer has a complex history involving inter alia: co-territorial influences between music cultures and collaboration between performers from different communities; the frequent and ultimately genocidal persecution of these Jewish communities resulting in mass emigration, the development of diaspora communities (including in our home city), and the destruction of the homeworld in which klezmer thrived; the assimilative pressures on the diaspora communities and the decline of klezmer music culture in both its original and new contexts; and the 1970/80s revival (Livingston, 1999) of interest in klezmer resulting in it becoming a globally-distributed music genre (Rogovoy, 2000). Despite this status, for almost all students taking the module and thereby having an ICM experience, klezmer is unfamiliar, as indeed it was for us originally.

Klezmer Ensemble Performance (KEP) Pedagogy

When the klezmer ensemble performance (KEP) module was introduced into the undergraduate music programme in 2011, together with the gamelan ensemble, it provided students with an opportunity to experience an unfamiliar music culture. These experiences of a musical ‘Other’ occur within a department in which ‘Western’ music theory and practice remain core despite the programme broadening its scope in recent years. The module can be understood as part of the performing, or experiencing, ethnomusicology agenda (Solis, 2004; Krüger, 2009). The context matters though - teaching klezmer in our UK city differs from teaching it in New York for example, not least because the Yiddish-speaking hinterland and depth of klezmer tradition available to support klezmer education in the latter context contrasts with klezmer’s shallower roots in our context. For this reason, the KEP module is framed by a focus on situated performance - that is, performer attentiveness to the particularities of each klezmer ensemble performance (Fay, Mawson & Palacios, 2024). Thus, we encourage the ensemblists to think about their playing as situated in:

- *time and space* (e.g. a lunch-time concert in the department concert hall);
- *purpose, relationship, and function* (e.g. a departmental concert, for klezmer aficionados, as mixing entertainment with assessment);
- *logistical possibilities and constraints* etc (e.g. as arranged for a quintet rather than the full ensemble in response to reduced performer availability); and
- *music cultures* (e.g. with performance conceptualised as a re-imagined Old World wedding).

We invite students to consider:

- the *chrono-topical* - given the rich history and development of klezmer as a music culture, what are the implications and possibilities for, and responsibilities when, performing klezmer in our city context in the twenty-first century?
- the *socio-political* - given the politics swirling around klezmer as a music culture, what are the implications for, and responsibilities of, the ensemble performing klezmer for/ in particular performance contexts? and

- the *contextual-performative* - given the contrasting characteristics of the performance opportunities available, what are the implications for, and affordances of, performing klezmer for each of these performance contexts?

Further, the approaches we have developed for KEP teaching (Fay, Mawson & Bithell, 2022) are shaped by the traditions and practices of klezmer education (as discussed, for example, by Netsky, 2004), and by dimensions proposed in World Music Pedagogy (e.g. Campbell et al., 2005; Schippers, 2010; Coppola et al., 2021; Campbell, 2004). These dimensions include:

musical awareness-raising	←→	cultural awareness-raising
notation-based learning	←→	learning by ear
atomistic/analytical focus	←→	holistic focus
soloistic performance focus	←→	ensemble performance focus

At different moments in the teaching and learning, certain dimensions might be more foregrounded and the emphasis might be placed more to one end of each dimension. We additionally strengthen the IcM as aspect of our methodology with dimensions underpinned by intercultural thinking about culture more as an emergent process than a product or entity (Holliday, 1999, Street, 1993) - these dimensions include the development of:

- transmusicality rather than bi-musicality;
- multiple rather than mono-perspectives on what klezmer performance means; and
- an appreciation of (music) cultures as dynamic, emergent processes (musicking) rather than as static phenomena (music).

Finally, as the students take their performance out into the local Jewish and multicultural communities, we encourage them to be attentive to the debates about, and dangers of cultural appropriation, and to view their performances as cultural translation and appreciation (Waligórska, 2013; Howard, 2020; Fay & Mawson, 2021). One alumnus reflected on it thus: “*we have more of a responsibility to know what we’re doing because we’re playing a music that is associated with a particular culture*”.

Through performances within and beyond the university, students have a stimulus and context for their developing awareness of music culture diversity. Hood (1960) understood such music culture awareness in terms of *bi-musicality* but we prefer the term *transmusicality* to capture the students’ understanding of the diverse musical cultures with which they become familiar and in which they develop resources for their musicking. The enactment of such transmusical understanding involves transcending the boundaries of fixed music cultures, with students reflexively and respectfully positioning themselves in the complexities of the musical landscape. The module also provides students with a music context and stimulus for their intercultural development. Thus, not only is the ensemble an *intercultural musicking* space (Fay, Mawson & Bithell, 2022; Fay, forthcoming), it also provides them with an opportunity to develop *intercultural personhood* (Huang, 2021a, as informed by Kim, 2008). This involves “the first-person meaning-making of who I am in intercultural experience” (Huang, 2022, p.83). We link this to students’ developing understanding of the diverse cultural resources with which they became familiar. The enactment of such cultural diversity similarly involves transcending the boundaries of fixed national, regional, or other cultures, with students reflexively and respectfully positioning themselves in the complexities of the cultural landscape.

Researching the KEP Experience

From Hunches to Research

Through their experiences of performing a music culture rooted in the Jewish world to audiences with a significant degree of Jewish affiliation, our (former) students seem to become more aware of the cultural dimension of music performance. For example, in her reflections on the module, one alumna noted how, *“as we’ve branched out to the Jewish community more in [the city], we’ve had direct contact with Jewish people and that’s been a learning experience”*. She was concerned that the Jewish audiences *“might judge us”* because they *“know the music [which is] part of their lives”* in ways that it is not for the students. The challenge for her was not only about technique but also about respect for the cultural anchors of the music - *“I also worry that we might not do it right and they’ll get upset”*.

Such reflective comments encouraged us to try to better understand the module’s contribution over and above what it explicitly seeks to teach and assess and to understand more about the subsequent value former students attach to their KEP experience. We recognised that a reflective performer stance might capture these experiences (see Fay, Mawson & Palacios, 2024), and that they may also be articulated through narrative (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004; Reissman, 2008). But we also recognised that such reflective and narrative approaches mediate the experiences through language. Musicians are not alone in knowing more than they can express verbally - knowledge and understandings come in different forms and are not reducible to verbal language: some ways of knowing can be “ineffable” (Eisner, 2008: p.5). We follow others (e.g. Harvey, McCormick, & Vanden, 2019) in wanting to better understand the totality of the musicians’ experience, in part by resisting the reliance upon students’ familiar linguistic and musical modes of thinking and expression. Accordingly, attentive to the value of insights expressed both verbally and visually, our approach combined a visual creative arts method (blind portrait) with narrative discussion.

Blind Portrait

The blind-portrait method involves participants drawing with their eyes shut (Huang, 2022). It is derived from a drawing training technique (Nicolaidis, 1941; Edwards, 1999) and can bypass readily available symbolic systems and encourage more organic, personal, and imaginative modes of drawing (Edwards, 1999, p. 92). Humans can see through the eyes of the mind – i.e. imagination (Huang, 2021b) - as their inner mental-images are entwined with, and evoked by, all their other senses such as sounds, smell, words, emotions, memories, and desires (Weber, 2008). A move beyond language as the only way and source of knowing, and opening up possibilities of bodily awareness, uncertainty, vulnerability, may bring to the fore the less noticed ideas and enable the de-familiarisation of the familiar. Our intention in using this method was to de-centre what (former) students may habitually say through words about their music practice and course experience; and to embrace the complex feelings about intercultural musical being that they may not surface in verbal reflections.

Our study took place in 2020 when Covid-19 social distancing obligations required us to undertake the research online. We worked with a convenience sample of fourteen former students drawn from six different cohorts of the KEP module. As with many of our alumni, these musicians were easily available to us as they had retained some links with and interests in klezmer performance. They belong to a klezmer afterlife (Waligórska, 2013) beyond the module - we were talking to the ‘converted’ as it were. We chose to focus on former students partly to avoid the ethical challenges associated with researching, and potentially shaping, current students’ ongoing studies. This decision was also informed by our desire to learn more about their KEP experiences as set against their broader understandings of their

performer development and other aspects of their musicianship. Such understandings are not only shaped in the academically-located stage of their musicianship but also by their experiences in the years following graduation. The same applies to their development of intercultural personhood.

In the study, data generation sessions were online (Zoom), lasted up to an hour, and involved one klezmer alumnus. Both of us, as researchers, were involved, thus combining a klezmer-playing, klezmer-teaching researcher well-known to the alumni (i.e. the first author), and a researcher specialising in arts-based methods who was not known to the participants (i.e. the second author). The sessions built upon the existing relationship between, and shared experiences of, the first researcher and the participants. It was also framed by the generative information gap between participants and second author. As researchers, we shared both an intercultural education specialism and a keen interest in arts-based and narrative research methods.

With their eyes closed, each participant was asked to draw a portrait of ‘who I am’ in their experience of klezmer performance. We stressed that ‘portrait’ did not refer to their physical appearance but rather to the kind of person they are in klezmer performance and we reassured them that being good at drawing was less important than being comfortable using a creative-arts method to explore their KEP experiences and sense of musical personhood. Once they had more or less completed their drawing, we asked the musicians, now with their eyes open, if they wanted to briefly change or add anything. This portrait drawing stage took up to ten minutes to complete. The musicians then sent us a photograph of their portrait which became a shared reference point in the following verbally-mediated stage of the online session. Here is an example portrait from the participant with pseudonym Oscar:



Figure 1 *Oscar's Blind Portrait*

Combining Visual with Verbal Meaning-Making

The verbal part of the zoom encounter, as entangled with the visual part, had two stages, both with a narrative aspect, i.e. the musicians tell the story of their drawing and the meanings made through this process; and they

then explore, in a narratively-rich way, how the KEP experience became part of their total musical personhood. The stages involve discussion of:

1. the portrait and the intentions involved in its creation - focusing on the '*what*' and '*how*' of their drawing process, and exploring what the portrait meant for them and what their process of meaning-making through it involved; and
2. the portrait's meaning - focusing on the '*so what*' insights to be learned from their meaning-making.

We began the narratively-framed part of the research encounters by inviting each participant to verbally introduce their portrait and their process of creating it. We tended not to interrupt with questions or comments, but wherever possible allowed them to 'get into the flow' of speaking about their portrait. As they did so, they often narrated what they did first, second, and so on, and why they did so.

Two Illustrative Cases

Oscar

In giving a verbal account of his process of blind portrait meaning-making portrait, Oscar took some little time to get into a verbal 'flow' corresponding to the visual flow as he drew his portrait earlier (see Figure 1 above). He began by telling us about how he set about the task:

So, I went completely blank, and then started, and then thought I need to draw something, so I drew some random blue stripes to the left of, the left of centre, which I think now sort of don't fit with the final aesthetic of the drawing. But maybe they [do] ..., [I] mean, I did them so they're probably supposed to be there. And then actually I thought about what I wanted to do in my [portrait] idea. And then that's, so I started with that blue bedrock, foundation, which sort of symbolises my heritage and yeah, sort of growing up in England, and recall the culture that I grew up with, and then, yeah, and then I started having this idea of these kind of not sparks, but sort of sparks of difference.

As he became more flowing, the procedural (e.g. what he did first, and so on) melded with the explanatory (i.e. the why of his portrait details):

So I think, in my mind, what I was going for was ... the sort of bedrock of my musical education is obviously a very Western - part classical and part folk music - education, so that grounds me in terms of harmony, rhythm, metre ... that's all within that blue bedrock. So, I decided that as a starting point, that would be a good idea of having this foundation, which as you continue up, is also my limiting factor ... within all of my musical creating is that, my basis is within this Westernised musical practice, so that's why the corners are also that blue colour ... in my mind, it's kind of my bedrock and also my limiting factors.

And then, in terms of my klezmer playing and different cultural music performance, this was kind of sparks in new directions that are all based and are still developed from my Western training because that's kind of the way I've learned these things is from a comparison at least to what I'm used to. So I thought of them emerging from this Western classical and folk tradition.

Oscar used the same colour ('blue') as a visual code of related set of meanings in the portrait, where he critically positioned his cultural heritage as both a basis for and a limit for his intercultural musical being. He recognised that it was based upon this 'bedrock' and framed by this 'viewpoint' that his intercultural musical encounters and practices spark, explode, connect, and flow in 'looping-around' ways. These poetic, energy-charged reflections were visually illustrated by the 'flashes'/'fireworks' and 'melodic' lines as he described. With the visual, material metaphors, Oscar's blind portrait abstracted a dynamic yet situated structure of his intercultural musicianhood.

From the above extracts, we can see that the musician's understanding of the process of drawing the portrait is entangled with the portrait itself and what it might mean. Just as the portrait drawing process itself is minimally mediated by the researchers, so, too, we wanted this narrativisation of the portrait process and its intended meanings to flow without significant researcher mediation. It is only once the account is 'out' that we begin to discuss what the musicians drew and what they say about the elements of their portrait.

For example, in the ensuing discussion with Oscar, the second author prompted him to "explain a little bit more" about the blue corners which he drew as a visualisation of his English culture foundation. The discussion built more on the musicians' chosen ideas than on the researchers' agenda. It also built on the visual meaning-making as the starting point. This process is not a question-and-answer interview - instead, the musician and the researchers co-construct a semiotic sense-making of the portrait.

A broader discussion then follows in which the researchers pick up on some of the details of the previous discussion. In Oscar's case, this focused on the intercultural and transmusal aspects of his klezmer experiences, mindful that these were likely to be unfamiliar to him before he took the KEP module. His contributions brought together both the module-based experiences and his subsequent wider experiences:

... when I was doing the module the music was definitely the area that I was ... got the most enjoyment from, from learning, and but then going to New York, the culture, being sort of involved directly within that culture ... [it] was so interesting for me and I absolutely loved learning by being just involved with it instead of reading through books ... I think it was only learning about the culture via Jewish musicians ... yeah, by lots of Jewish musicians that I was playing with daily... and then talking with ... and for me that was when the culture became such an interesting part and such a key part of the music ...

As his narratively-oriented meaning-making extended from the musical to the political aspects, we could see how the experience of intercultural musicking through klezmer might trigger thoughtful engagement with complex and uncomfortable geo-political areas significantly beyond what was touched upon in the module:

.... when I was talking to about New York the other thing that really, really especially involved me with the culture was being very much in the present culture so while I was there there was, so yeah ... the whole Palestine-Israel conflict was really interesting talking to young Jewish people, and then talking to older Jewish people ... well not asking them but being aware of different people's opinions and how it had to be spoken about in sort of in hushed, secretive ways, and I think traditional music is often thought of as trad folk and that kind of idea ... it often appears old or has sort of some mindset of being traditional and therefore old but then doing this traditional music with such a current political within such a current political culture was incredibly interesting

and then hearing sort of political klezmer songs about Palestine, sort of pro-Palestine Yiddish songs which is, yeah, mind blowing for me

And as he made these connections, we could see how the university-based KEP experiences had opened up a door to engagement with the world in all its geo-political complexity, going far beyond the musicological or even ethnomusicological details of klezmer as a music culture.

Charlie

As most of our klezmer students have no Jewish heritage, their engagement with klezmer and Jewish audiences represents an encounter with musical and cultural ‘Otherness’. This encounter occurs within a familiar national context (i.e. the UK) for most of them as British (i.e. ‘home’) students. For our few international students, the encounters occur within a broader intercultural space. Here is the blind portrait of one such student (“Charlie”):

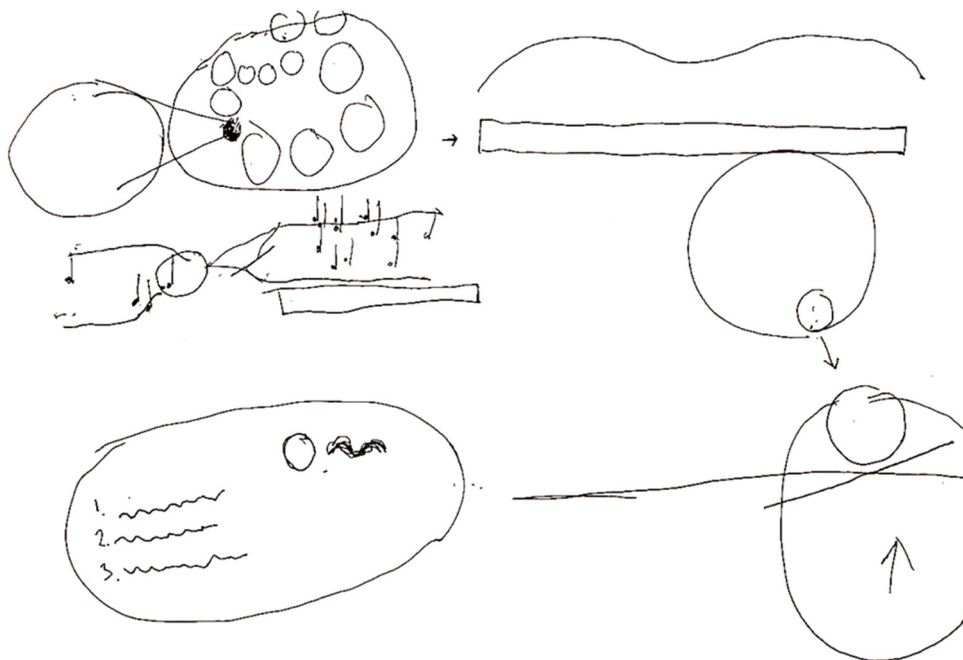


Figure 2 *Charlie's Blind Portrait*

Without oversimplifying the challenges that any and all students may face when joining an undergraduate community for the first time, IcM encounters such as our klezmer ensemble may be felt somewhat differently by international students because these encounters are set within an overall academic and sociocultural experience involving acculturative processes. Charlie drew a big circle on the top left with many small circles in it, which represents the klezmer class and its students. In the class, he first represented himself as a small black dot, which he then used two lines to connect with a much bigger circle on the left. He said that these two lines are his ‘filter’, a mechanism through which he showed a small percentage of himself in the classroom. Using English as the language of his internationally-undertaken studies, he comments:

I think you have a filter everywhere you go [...] you're not able to show 100% of you at any given time to anyone [not] even your very close your parents, even your lovers, your relatives.

Charlie said that he was not particularly at home in the music department. Most of his friends were from the International Society instead. For him, home was a small, stable community in Indonesia where, for example, he'd been at school with the same people for fifteen years. This made the move to our university and city in the UK challenging:

And now I'm sent to the other side of the world with nothing, no connections, nobody. And perhaps, because I always had friends around me, I didn't need to make any new friends. But this was a new skill that I had to learn. [but] I think it's a very clicky faculty. I think by the first week, people were friendly, but then in native social groups, and then it became very difficult to penetrate those social groups. And now I'm just this lone floating guy on the outside who for over a year in my mind is constantly saying "I have to be accepted, I have to be accepted. I have to get in".

Charlie thus came to the klezmer ensemble - a group of students from different cohorts of study who did not necessarily know each other previously and who often needed to form new relationships - as an outsider. But his musical learning and performance experiences from his upbringing, for example, learning by ear and performing without notated music, actually prepared him for aspects of the KEP pedagogy which many local students found unfamiliar and challenging. Here, we see some of the nested complexities of IcM with Charlie self-disclosing his isolation in the ensemble (and department) but finding commonalities between his more familiar home musical context and klezmer which was somehow closer to him than Western classical music for example.

In discussing his portrait, Charlie initially focused on a general account of his course experience, drawing on familiar, surface-level descriptions of participation and learning. It was only when the second author drew attention to a visual sign in his painting - the 'two lines' - and asked what they might signify, that Charlie began to articulate his previously unspoken experiences as a minority international student in the class. This visual cue disrupted habitual, socially-acceptable narratives, and unsettled comfortable, usually linguistically-filtered self-presentations. Instead, it opened a decentring space, where visual symbols became mediating materials through which less noticed voice and discomfort could surface - which might otherwise have remained silenced or avoided in conventional verbal discussion.

Discussion and Concluding Comments

We now return to the foci mentioned at the start: what have we learned through this study regarding students' developing transmusicality and intercultural personhood? And what have we learned about their response to our pedagogy? The post-module, post-graduation klezmer afterlife of these musicians - a subset of the 140+ students who have taken the module over the years - is one characterised by retained connectivity with our klezmer world which seems to be enduringly significant for them. They spoke of how the module had brought together diverse elements of their musical and cultural personhood but also opened up whole new areas for them, such as the historical and contemporary complexities of the Jewish world. They found themselves, through klezmer, entering areas of debate including the geo-politics of Palestine, the role of Yiddish (and language more generally) in identity affiliations, and the value of musicking in reminiscence and wellbeing. Many of these broader outcomes of their musical journeys that began with the KEP module were not formally assessed as part of it. This exploratory research made clear to us that the module enables the musicians to become more appreciative of - and to connect more deeply with - the diverse musical resources they are familiar with (i.e. their transmusicality), and to become more aware of the diversity within and between different cultural groups (i.e. their intercultural personhood). The power of such IcM is foregrounded through the combination of visual and verbal narrative in ways which went beyond what we hoped for when

we embarked upon the study. The feedback clues we had earlier gathered were now underpinned by visual and verbal data confirming for us both the value of the immediate performative and technical aspects but also the musicians' far-reaching awareness of the wider world and their engagement with it.

We now also return to our opening interest in visual and narrative meaning-making methods. The blind portraits generated for our practice-evaluation were all different. They were messy (produced with eyes shut) and so too were the verbal stages (as they worked spontaneously to narrativise the ineffable). Classrooms likely privilege fluency in dominant cultural and linguistic norms where students are expected to perform belonging through appropriateness. By embracing a 'methodological third-space' (Huang & Cockayne, 2025) of visual-verbal thinking and expression, meaning-making beyond the normative discourse could emerge.

Despite the unfamiliarity with the blind portrait method and the pandemic challenges of using this online, the musicians seemed to enjoy - and in several cases said this explicitly - the experience of drawing their portraits. Some noted the surprising sense-making that arose in the process as they found themselves drawing who they were in klezmer ensemble performance in ways that were unexpected and unrehearsed. The visual meaning-making enabled abstract sense-making of what might otherwise be ineffable. Extending beyond usually linguistically-framed, rational reflections, many of our alumni presented their bodily interconnectedness and being ('energy') as central part of their intercultural musicianhood - through visual metaphors such as abstract flows, lights, plants, sun, or fireworks. They sometimes struggled for words to explain these non-linguistic senses and otherwise took time to find the flow for these newly-articulated, multimodal meanings. This prioritising of the visual, as then intertwined with a verbal discussion, placed the musicians centre-stage in setting the agenda for discussion, with researcher intervention following their lead rather than shaping their replies.

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