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Conference Proceedings:

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**31st ISME World Conference on Music Education in Porto Alegre,
Brazil July 20th -25th 2014**

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31st ISME World Conference on Music Education in Porto Alegre, Brazil July 20th -25th 2014

This year, the International Society for Music Education (ISME) conference “Listening to the musical diversity of the world,” took place at the Pontifical Catholic University of the southern Brazilian state Rio Grande do Sul from July 20th to 25th 2014.

The conference program was divided into several sections and covered music in schools and teacher education, research, community music activity, the education of professional musicians, music education for young children and children with special needs, instrumental and vocal teaching and music making, music technology, musicians’ health and wellness, and El Sistema-inspired programs and jazz education.

Each day the conference started with a different key note speaker. Their diverse profiles, origins and areas of interest both unified and underscored the global nature of the program. Carlinhos Brown, a Brazilian percussionist and a founder of the Pracatum Association, an NGO created for talented percussionists to develop social and artistic projects, talked about his experiences with community music activities. Katherine Zeserson, a psychologist and creative writer from the United States, discussed the diversity and authenticity of musical experiences.

Eckart Altenmüller, director of the Institute of Music Physiology and Musicians’ Medicine in Hannover University in Germany talked about musicians’ health and wellness, with an emphasis on both the physical and psychological issues that can hinder them from reaching their full potential as performers.

Finally, Maria Rebeca Otero, coordinator of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sector of education in Brazil, spoke alongside Carla Dazzi, the general coordinator for culture and education under Brazilian Ministry of Culture, and Malvina Tuttmann, the counselor for the National Council of Education. They discussed the Brazilian public policies for music education.

Most of the participants chose to present the key issues of their research projects to their colleagues by way of a 30-minute oral presentation.

Eddy Chang from Singapore National Institute of Education suggested a new model of teaching in which students are challenged to create problems instead of only solving them. Examples cited by Bach and Stravinsky demonstrated that students thrive on compositional constraints and obstacles, often self-imposed ones. Such challenges or “problems” appear to spark their creativity.

Craig Resta from Kent State University in Ohio talked about the doctoral studies in music education in the U.S. by researching all the steps involved in pursuing a doctoral study, from its purpose to the admission, coursework, research, writing, teaching, employment and professional opportunities available to those with a PhD in music education.

Carol Frierson-Campbell from the William Peterson University in New Jersey posed the following question together with her students: “So what?” Meaning, what difference does learning to do research make in students’ professional lives in and outside the university?

Research by Andrea Creech from the London Institute of Education explored the potential for an intergenerational community opera project to support positive “possible selves” amongst younger and older participants. The work was based on studies at the Education Department at Glyndebourne Opera House in the UK, where a new opera, titled “Imago,” focused on the theme of ageing in a digital world.

Many interesting teaching methods were discussed within the Music In Special Education section of the conference. Graham Welch, Adam Ockelford and Evangelos Himonides from the London Institute of Education presented their Sounds of Intent project for musical development of children and young people with complex needs, i.e., with severe learning difficulties (SLD), or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), and/or autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

As part of the ISME forum for vocal and instrumental teaching, Francis Dube, Alfredo Bautista and Marie-Audrey Noel from the University Laval discussed piano teachers’ pedagogical conceptions. They identified three conceptions used by piano teachers: Direct (teacher-centered conception, similar to the “master-apprentice” model), Interpretative (a sophisticated version of the latter), and Constructive (student-centered, aligned with constructivist pedagogical principles).

Alfredo Bautista from the Singapore National Institute of Education also explored the question: How does the style of music scores influence Spanish instrumental teachers’ conceptions of teaching and learning?

Musicians’ health and wellness is a relatively new area of interest among music educators. The necessity to develop effective preventive strategies for playing-related injuries was emphasized in various presentations. Serap Bastepe-Gray, Jullian Grey and David Sobel from the Peabody Conservatory discussed methods that can facilitate the return to play following playing-related injuries.

Dale Rickert and Margaret Barrett from the University of Queensland proposed a new holistic model of musicians’ injury risk, from which future prevention strategies may be developed. They categorized injury risks within a framework that includes physical and psychological factors, lifestyle, behaviors and playing habits, environmental factors, and psychosocial and cultural factors.

Apart from the oral presentations, numerous symposiums took place daily wherein one topic united the work of three or more professionals from different parts of the world.

The so-called “creative round table,” which focused on new teacher competencies and highlighted creative innovations in music education, was moderated by Emily Achieng Akuno from Kenya, Margaret Barrett from Australia, Ana-Lucia Frega from Argentina, and Valerie Peters from Canada. The aim of this “creative round-table” was to discuss different points of view on creative practices, music teaching and music teacher education and encourage shared insight into important ways to improve music education.

Barrett, together with Graham Welch from the London Institute of Education, also held a symposium on creative collaboration in and through music that included perspectives on composition, performance, and music education. They argued that creativity is not the sole province of a “creative genius” working in isolation; rather, creative thought and activity arise from collaborative practices in and across time and space. The papers in this symposi-

um drew on current theories on creative collaboration to illustrate ways in which such collaboration can be furthered across a range of music forms and activities.

A moderated round-table discussion on curricula and pedagogy for music education research in nations around the world was held by Bo Wah Leung (Hong Kong), Gary McPherson (Australia), Heloisa Feichas (Brazil), Ruth Wright (Canada), Alexandra Kertz-Welze (Germany), Sidsel Karlsen (Norway), Lori Custodero (USA) and Carol Frierson-Campbell (USA). They discussed the main issues that music education researchers are facing around the globe.

Canada's Wright also participated in a symposium on sociology of music education in which she drew on the legacy of eminent French theorist Pierre Bourdieu. The main aim was to illustrate some of the theoretical affordances and challenges when examining sociological issues to do with musical and educational practices through specific Bourdieusian concepts.

The principles and practices of pedagogy within El Sistema and Sistema-inspired programs were discussed during a 90-minute symposium that begun with a short overview of research and critical debates relating to pedagogy within Sistema contexts, followed by three papers and one demonstration that explore specific facets of Sistema-inspired pedagogy in England, Israel, Portugal, and Brazil. The symposium was held by eminent researchers Andrea Creech (UK) Richard Hallam (USA), Adena Portowitz (Israel), Graca Boal Palheiros (Portugal) and Vanessa Rodrigues (Canadian teaching in Brazil).

Among the many workshops held during the conference, I would like to single out Pamela Pike's (USA) practical insight into Brazilian pieces for the intermediate piano students. The presentation highlighted pedagogically sound and musically striking intermediate piano repertoire from Brazilian composers such as Guarnieri, Alimonda, de Curitiba, Morozwicz, Santoro and others.

Jennifer Snow from the University of California in Los Angeles gave an interesting presentation on musical imagination. She discussed the educational potential in movement, creative listening, visual inspiration and expression, sound exploration, context and character creation, physical technique and gesture, and sensory transfer.

Eleni Vosniadou from Brazil held a practical workshop on the Alexander Technique, which is used to improve musical performance and alleviate the psychological issues of many musicians.

I would also like to single out the poster sessions held on two conference days, as well as the multitude of concerts and performances during the lecture breaks. Performers were coming not only from the host country but also from Argentina, South Africa, Mexico, Australia, USA, Canada, Chile and Ireland.

The 31st ISME World conference closing ceremony was presented by the Royal Conservatory of Scotland, whose Brass Department announced the next European issue of one of the most important events for music education.

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