

CHAPTER 17

THE ETHICS OF COMMUNITY MUSIC: CRITICAL QUESTIONS AND INSIGHTS

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Abstract

This chapter outlines different concepts and positions on ethics as they apply to community music. An understanding of ethics is important in music because of its intrinsic nature as a human practice that involves acts of sharing, participation, interaction and engagement through music (Cobussen & Nielsen, 2012). The changing and diverse nature of communities means that community music facilitators need to have the necessary conceptual tools to consider the possible ethical consequences and directions of

their community music actions. A critical, questioning approach is advocated for, so that the situational demands of different community contexts are taken into account.

Following a discussion of ethical principles and values important to music education, the chapter outlines some ethical contexts and perspectives specific to community music.

Finally, a simple framework is suggested that could be applied to the critical questioning of the ethics of community music (What? When? Why? How? Who? Where?). This could serve as a simple tool to help community musicians and cultural workers negotiate their way through complex decision-making and creative practice in their work.

Keywords

Community music, ethics, questioning, hospitality, care, improvisation, criticality

Community music is a shared practice that involves human interaction, sharing, co-participation, engagement and exchange. As such, whenever humans get together as a community with music, ethical considerations become important to those involved.

Community music practices are fluid, porous and negotiated; they are diverse and constantly changing in ways that affect participants and other groups they are socially connected to (Bowman, 2009). It is essential therefore that those involved in community (and other) music seriously consider the ethical questions, issues and sensibilities that inform their thinking and direct their ethical decisions and actions.

An understanding of ethics is important in music because of its intrinsic nature as a human practice that involves acts of sharing, participation, interaction and engagement through music (Cobussen & Nielsen, 2012). The field of ethics has a long philosophical

history and is related to a range of terms and concepts. Ethics is commonly linked to ‘moral philosophy’ and ‘morality’, and is also associated with a family of concepts including rights, principles, values and virtues. Ethics are concerned with choices about inter-human relationships (Barrow, 1982), choices that follow considerations and deliberations of values such as goodness, rightness, honesty and justice that in turn help us see connections between types of action and practices and considerations of what constitutes good or bad behavior (Haynes, 1999). The term ethic comes from the Greek *ethike philosophia* (moral philosophy) and is also related to the word *ethos* (habitual character and disposition) (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2015). There are two senses of the Greek word *ethos*, one referring to the “character of being”, the other to an embodied, relational or community sense of being (Gouzouasis et al, 2014, p.2n1). The relational sense of *ethos*—the ethos of being with others—has an association with the ethics of community music and the idea of *communitas*, of being a community in the moment with shared feelings of togetherness (Veblen, 2008; Veblen & Waldron, 2012). A community is not necessarily a self-evident good or unified whole; it may be characterized by difference, plurality and diversity, and by a changing ethos. What a community does, in music, can be understood as a praxis that changes over time along with the “plurality of ends” (Bowman, 2009, p. 117) those changes serve.

Scholarship in the field of community music has featured many examples of descriptive writing about different examples of community music around the world (Veblen, Messenger, Silverman & Elliott, 2013). While these descriptions have been valuable as documentation of different forms and ways of community music, there has been less discussion on the ethical aspects of community music. Considerations of ethics

in community music inquire into the values, purposes and dispositions of community music activity. These considerations also require a degree of *criticality*, so that critical questions and judgments can be made about the intentions, conditions, contexts, processes and outcomes of community music. A critical ethics is thus required to ensure that the changing direction and nature of a given practice is one that is desirable to the community as a whole and to those it affects. My understanding of critical is drawn on the ethical writing of Freire (2000), Giroux (Giroux, 2003; Giroux & Giroux, 2006) and other philosophers of education like Burbules and Berk (1999) who have contributed to ongoing scholarship on critical pedagogy, the questioning of educational, cultural, social and political contexts, the development of critical awareness and capacity, dialogic engagement, and the possibilities of agency and social transformation. A critical awareness of ethics, I believe, is important for the field of community music so that it can flourish and be more of a transformational force in society.

In this chapter I describe different ethical positions and contexts that may be of value to community musicians and to related fields like music education. Following a brief discussion of selected writing on ethics in music education, I describe some ethical positions that have been articulated specifically in community music. I also offer some further insights about music improvisation as an example of a mode of music making that embodies ethical action. In the second part of the chapter I turn to matters of applied ethics. Ethical questions and thinking, I suggest, can illuminate and critically assist community musicians and others in helping them assess questions, issues and sensibilities in community music activity. Finally, I suggest a simple framework that could be applied to the critical questioning of the ethics of community music (What? When? Why? How?

Who? Where?).

Ethics and music education

I begin with scholarly discussions on ethics that have begun to surface in the field of music education in recent decades. Although they mainly emphasise school contexts, many of the discussions have relevance for community music. Regelski (2012)¹ provides an outline of different ethical concepts in relation to the professionalism of school music teachers and their codes of conduct. He describes three kinds of normative ethics for music teachers: duty ethics, consequentialist ethics and virtue ethics. Duty ethics are rooted in the duties of what a person is obliged to carry out in relation to the rights and values of those she interacts with. The right to *participate* in music activity, for instance, is a right that is valued by music educators who make it their duty to ensure that all willing and able participants get involved in music making activities. On the other hand consequentialist ethics consider the possible outcomes of actions, whether particular actions make a difference or not to the persons or groups involved. This may involve judgments about the suitability of one particular action over another and whether a chosen pathway might lead to making a difference to a targeted group in need. The vocal repertoire in a choir concert, for instance, could be chosen to reflect the cultural background of an ethnic minority within the larger choir—a decision a choir leader could make to promote inclusivity and cultural difference. In this instance the consequences of the action would hopefully lead to a positive ethical outcome for both the minority group and the choir as a whole. The third category - virtue ethics - takes into account the personal and ethical traits and characteristics of people. Regleski draws on Aristotle's

notion of *praxis* (right action) to tease out the specific virtues that are more likely to encourage well-being including: *phronesis*—the virtue of being wise and care-full; *eubolia*—acquiring knowledge; *gnomē*—deliberating about what is right; *sunēsis*—having understanding of a situation; and *dēinotes*—versatility to cope with changing situations. These virtues not only suggest personal qualities of music teachers, but also of community musicians and facilitators who embody these and other ethical virtues in community music workshops and other forms of community engagement. Community musicians act as role models to ensure that they and their participants adopt ethical virtues through musical experiences. As Silverman says: “By working on one’s sense of personal responsibility and character, virtue and well being [is] established. Virtue, here, is a habit that is learned” (Silverman, 2012a, p. 101).

Another area of scholarship in music education that foregrounds ethics is praxial music education. This philosophical perspective of music teaching and learning seeks to recover music from its historical disconnect with ethics in western culture. Bowman (2000) traces this disconnect back to the Enlightenment project which he sees as marked by Kant’s separation of the ‘ethic’ from the ‘aesthetic’ in his critique of reason. After that time (18th century), an increasingly discernable separation between music and ethics became apparent in European culture, where music was seen as something purely for aesthetic pleasure and introspection, separate from ethical concerns. Music in this discourse, which was a distinctly European historical movement (and also colonized other parts of the world), became an object for contemplation and aesthetic judgment distinct from the thoughts, actions and social situations of the musicians and listeners who performed and experienced it. This theme is taken up by Elliott (1995) and Elliott

and Silverman (2014b) in their description of a praxial philosophy of music education, an ethically positioned music education that seeks to recover what people have lost through ‘aesthetic music education’—and its associated disconnect between music making activity and human ethics. What is needed is a way of reconnecting teachers and students with the meaningful, real-life aspects of music culture that they can feel personally and socially a part of. This holistic and multidimensional praxial concept of human-music-action embraces Aristotle’s notion of *eudaimonia* or human flourishing. *Eudaimonia*, they assert, is seen to reconnect music teachers and students with:

confidence, self-esteem, accumulating pride and happiness in and through one’s accomplishments, resilience and flexibility in dealing with temporary frustration and failure, a disposition to search for creative solutions to musical problems, an appreciation for the values of sustained practice, and a personal desire to contribute musically and socially to the positive transformation of oneself, others, and one’s community at large. (Elliott & Silverman, 2014a, p. 70)

While unethical music education, or music education divorced from matters of ethical intent, can be negative, debilitating and dehumanizing; music education focused on *eudaimonia* is enabling and humanizing—it promotes human flourishing from both an individual perspective and socially within the wider community. An ethically informed music education requires a revisionary stance that situates music as an interactive process indebted to social engagement. Praxial music education was inspired in part by ethnomusicological and socio-philosophical concepts of non-western music through scholars like Alperson (1991) who affirmed thinking about music that took into account

the “socio-cultural, intersubjective, and embodied and enactive natures of musics and social praxes” (Alperson, cited in Elliott & Silverman, 2014a, p. 86). These and other alternative paradigms of music have reinvigorated a more communal and ethical concept of music education.

While the praxis project sought to restore an ethical base to music education, other scholars have expressed caution about the dangers of over-emphasizing theories and traditional practices in music education without thought to changing circumstances. An interesting contribution is Allsup and Westerlund’s (2012) essay on situational ethics, which problematizes the difficulties music teachers have with methods-based or formulaic tradition-based teaching that fails to embody the ethically challenging and specific situations music teachers encounter. They assert that music teaching processes in both formal and informal settings and other situations can be contradictory and problematic, and not always symptomatic of one particular ethical pathway or ideal. In such cases ideals and practices such as student centered informal learning (e.g., Green, 2008) or the teaching of situated music practices (Elliott, 1995) can at times be difficult to ethically manage or maintain due to complexities of specific situations. They call on teachers to exercise more imagination when dealing with situational differences in music education settings, and to adopt a questioning or dialectical approach (Jorgenson, 2008) to navigate their way through the different contingencies and challenges that students bring to each musical occasion. In this respect they suggest that an ethical music teacher: necessarily deliberates between multiple and contradictory ends and multiple and contradictory ideals, and the means and methods that are found to be effective—to be “good” or “right”—depend on the *multiple* and sometimes even

contradictory situations she encounters. (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012, p.135)

These points remind music educators that different situations and contexts of music teaching can indeed be complex and problematic and that they require a degree of teacher responsiveness, ethical attunement and critical awareness. Similarly, community musicians find themselves in constantly changing situations that demand careful considerations of ethics. The growing scholarship on ethics in music education is equally pertinent to community music, indeed they often overlap, and can help in the critical and creative evaluations of ethical dimensions of community music approaches, situations and settings.

Community music and ethics

Community music is a contested notion that has complex and multiple meanings—this has been well documented in the community music scholarship to date. Debates in community music literature about the meaning of community music have been expressed through sociological and ethical frameworks. The word ‘community’ itself can be taken to mean different things. In one sense community is a holistic and overarching term that can mean all groups and social connections in society of different kinds. But this broad definition has proved to be relatively unhelpful and does not provide clarity about work and nature of community music (Schippers & Bartleet, 2013). Community can be thought about in terms of small-scale, intimate, relational communities or as larger, more structured, systematized structures. Consider, for instance, the difference between a local community choir of friends and the state-organized mass choir singing in the parks of

Beijing. Veblen (2002) suggests that Tönnies' sociological divisions of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are useful for marking out the differences between family-type, communal relationships (*Gemeinschaft*) and large-scale, state-level social constructs (*Gesellschaft*). Community musicians often report an ethic of caring in more intimate community music sessions similar to that of the experience of 'family', which would seem to be closer to the idea of *Gemeinschaft*. But given the intense urbanization of society and global patterns of migration and diaspora, music workers also need to be mindful of the role of community music in response to *Gesellschaft*—and the community response to the sense of alienation and detachment that many modern citizens experience in global, technocratic urban societies. A discerning ethical stance is thus required to make sense of the various contexts and purposes of community music, be it the fostering and care offered by close relationships or an offering of hope within the experience of detachment, alienation and dislocation people experience in modern life.

Higgins (2012) suggests that the definition of community music can be expanded by offering three concepts of community music: (1) music of a community (2) communal music making, and (3) an active intervention between a music leader or facilitator and participants. The third definition—community music as an intervention—has a more distinct, personal and active, ethical aspect to it inasmuch as it deals with a music leader or facilitator approaching a community music situation with distinct ethical intent. The broadness of Higgins' first two definitions, at first, seems to be vague and bland, at least from a categorical perspective—they imply that community music can be any kind of community music group. However, a critical and ethical perspective of different instances of community music can begin to sharpen our understanding of them. It is

through a critical and ethical lens that community musicians and scholars can begin to unpack more clearly what is important in each practical community music situation.

Higgins draws on French philosopher Derrida to develop the notion of community music in its contemporary context and as an intervention. He maintains that community in the contemporary world appears in multiple ways and levels for example, as collective identity, contextual fellowship, liminal communities, and as virtual communities (Higgins, 2012) implying a number of diverse potential settings, associations and situations. In this sense a community can be a group that meets face-to-face, shares ideas online, connects through shared interest, knowledge, ideology or religious belief, or occupies a space that ‘falls between the cracks’ in society such as in a prison, hospital or migrant neighborhood. These multiple contexts suggest that more discernment is needed to ascertain what is in fact a ‘community’ act. Further, communities don’t always act in ways that are ‘good’—group consensus can indeed lead to “fascism, fundamentalism, discord and war” (Higgins, 2012, p. 137). Given this complexity and potential unease, what is required is a more critical view of community that looks at it not in a neutral, idealistic or romantic way, but in a way that critically examines the plural and ethical intentions of communities and community members. Derrida’s (2000) notion of hospitality provides us with one kind of critical and ethical tool for such a task. Hospitality underpins the contemporary condition of community and “evokes the practical meaning of community in the work of community musicians” (Higgins, 2012, p. 133).

Derrida’s hospitality however contains some paradoxical elements that require a closer understanding—for there can be two kinds of hospitality operating: absolute or

unconditional hospitality on the one hand and conditional hospitality on the other.

Derrida says “absolute hospitality” is the unconditional acceptance of a stranger, or other, regardless of their name or social standing:

Absolute hospitality requires that I open my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner etc.) but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. (Derrida, 2000, p. 25)

This sense of absolute hospitality reflects a kind of openness that I believe many community musicians empathize with in relation to the nature of their work. Absolute hospitality is seen as an acceptance of the visitor in absolute terms without conditions, discrimination or knowledge. For instance, a community music workshop in a prison would need to accept the criminal history of the prison participants unconditionally. On the other hand conditional hospitality is hospitality with conditions: a hospitality that is framed from the point of view of the host. An act of hospitality will always commence from a conditional perspective because it comes from the host’s position as host who looks to the visitor as ‘other’. Derrida’s hospitality is a way of looking at the relation between two or more people as they act together in the form of an invitation or visitation. The invitation can be seen in terms of the ‘welcome’ (Higgins, 2012) of the community musician to the guest—say the person participating in the community music workshop. The welcome can be a kind of ritual of acceptance that is offered to others, an acceptance

of differences, cultural and ethical differences, language differences or of political and economic differences. Each welcome or invitation carries with it the double possibility of both limits (conditions) and openness (no conditions). The host's limits, for instance, upon giving an invitation are expressed in the host's language in terms of their initial expectations. But within this form of 'limited' or structured hospitality lies fragments or folds of unconditional or absolute hospitality—of the visitation. For a welcome act cannot fully know the worlds, languages and feelings of the other but can contain the possibility of an exchange, of a visit in terms of the other. Community musicians cannot fully know the background context and experience of the prisoner, migrant, or disadvantaged youth they welcome, but they can choose to remain open to the possibility of a shared exchange and a positive outcome through the musical activity they choose to initiate. Whereas conditional hospitality might seem certain, stable and decisive; unconditional hospitality is uncertain, unstable and indecisive—just as a community musician accepts a participant's offering without reservation but with some sense of uncertainty. This ethical disposition allows community musicians to enter the ethical uncertainty of hospitality with hope that it might lead to an expression of creativity, empowerment and life. These ethical ideas could help community musicians better understand “the paradoxical nature of communities” (Phelan, 2013, p. 174), the differences that are inherent in community music interactions, and of the difficulties that come forth when a community music facilitator forges ahead negotiating a pathway of hospitable music action, which cannot be fully known in advance.

Derrida's (2000) notion of hospitality highlights the importance of the relational aspect of the community music act. It involves a negotiation of power between that which

controls the self and others and the possibility of opening to difference and the unknown element of the other. The ethical judgments and actions of a community music facilitator mean moving between these ethical positions in determining not only how she might ‘govern’ the group and how the group might ‘govern’ her but also how the discourse or context might govern the collective action (Mantie, 2012). To Foucault, power is not something repressive or what lies between two people but rather power is the productive element that arises when one acts. This affirms the power relationships in a community as “a set of actions upon other actions” (Foucault, 1982, p. 798)—in other words, the possibility of productive power is intrinsically tied to the relational nature of community and the distribution of power through community music action. Community musicians need to be able to discriminate between productive power that leads to unethical or dehumanizing conditions, or productive power that leads to the flourishing of a community and its participants.

In addition to considerations of power, the community musician contends with judgments of the kinds of relational connections at play in a community event. Community music sessions can be seen as ‘rhizomatic’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), which is a useful way to conceptualize the different connections that emerge and that take life in a community music event. To Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the rhizome is a weed-like plant that grows, spreads and shoots in different directions across a garden. It suggests a way of thinking or image of thought that can be a creative realization of community music in its many forms, and its many directions of life. Rhizomes have “lines of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11); directions of intensity, desire and sensation that emerge and gain presence in a music session or event. A rhizome has

“neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). A community musician can conceive of their music interventions as provocations that will give root to new ideas, desires and perspectives within participants that work their way to fresh creative directions. Community musicians need to be able to firstly perceive the rhizomes that appear (creative directions of group action), work with them (negotiate creative and ethical perspectives), and critically discern the ethical conditions of the lines of flight that unfold with participants. To do this, they need to adopt agile and ethical pedagogies and become able to critically discern the immanent ethical and musical needs of a given situation. This responsive, receptive and agile type of pedagogy considers not “who it is that we should be...instead who it is that we might be” (May & Semetsky, 2008, p. 150). In a local community choir that I participated in, all sorts of interesting rhizomes developed life and took flight. For example, some choir members wanted to meet and share their own musical offerings in more informal settings such as birthdays and weddings. Some wanted to target people with specific needs through informal choir performances. Others developed their own spin-off ukulele singing groups and creative arrangements of songs that involved their family members, and so on. In these situations the choir leader stepped back to allow the rhizomes to take flight and develop their own subcultures of interest and collective desire.

Community music and music education have also been described as practices that embody an ethic of care (Edgar, 2012; Higgins, 2012; Silverman, 2012a, 2012b, 2009). Care ethics, based mainly on the experience of women, has evolved as a scholarly field of inquiry since the 1980s, and is now widely recognized in a range of fields (Noddings,

1984, 2012). Noddings states that care ethics is “ontologically basic and the caring relation is ethically basic” (Noddings, 2012, p. 771). Discussions of care ethics “start with neither the individual or collective but with the relation” (Noddings, 2012, p. 772). An important component in the relation is that the carer is attentive and a good listener. A carer also needs to be sensitive to the difference between *assumed* needs (what the carer thinks the cared-for needs) and *expressed* needs (what, through listening, the cared-for need). Noddings goes on to say:

The carer is first of all attentive [and] the attention of the carer is receptive. Its objective is to understand what the cared-for is experiencing—to hear and understand the needs expressed [and further] There are many times when, as carers, we cannot satisfy the expressed need of the cared-for. Sometimes we lack the resources, and sometimes we disapprove of the need or how it has been expressed. In the latter case, it is especially important to find a mode of response that will keep the door of communication open. (Noddings, 2012, p. 772)

Further to Noddings, Silverman (2012b) develops the notion of love in community music, drawing from the work of social justice advocate bell hooks (2000). Silverman argues that “an ethic of love is essential in any concept of care, and therefore in education and social justice” (Silverman, 2012b, p.158). She develops the idea of love-in-action, as a way of entering into relationships and caring for people. These ethical concepts express vital thinking and action for community musicians as they consider their own practices. Noddings’ (2012) suggestion implies that the community musician needs to be careful when assuming what their group needs to know and experience; they must

exercise receptive listening so that they move towards a fuller, loving understanding of the expressed needs of their participants. Moreover, Silverman's (2012b) exhortations of love-in-action, suggest that a community musician cannot 'fake' their community practice, but rather, ensure that they put into action genuine expressions of love in the interests of their loved ones. These ethical expressions remind the community musician that first and foremost their work involves a caring and loving relation with their fellow human beings, a relation that may require them to relinquish their personal agenda and follow the prompts of careful listening and loving attention.

The ethics of improvisation

Another key area impacting on the ethics of the community musician is the style and manner in which she engages in music. Community musicians can ask: *how* do we engage in ethical practices? One way that has ethical potential is through group improvisation. Group music improvisation is a community activity and mode of musical action that has strong links with ethical practice. Music improvisation can be simply defined as 'spontaneous music making', and to an extent that is what it is. However there are more complex understandings of collective improvisation and these indicate more clearly a connection with an ethical disposition and with community music.

Christopher Small points out that improvisation is the normal way of music making in many world cultures, simply expressed as "the way we play" (Small, 1987, p. 309). It is thus a very natural occurrence in daily life, a way, or mode of living. Higgins and Mantie (2013) point out that improvisation can be seen in multiple ways—as ability, culture and experience, representing different facets of life. In many world cultures music

improvisations emerge in counterpoint with the circumstances and experiences from which they arise. This amounts to a “dialogue between a musician and his [sic] music” (Jairazbhoy, cited in Nettl, 1998, p. 16). This dialogue not only exists within the relationship between a musician and her music culture, it also exists in the communal dialogues that occur in improvising groups. Improvisation, especially in its group form, enables openness and flexibility in music making that is not always experienced in other modalities. Further, group improvisation carries a possibility for the group of players to discover new ethical insights as they collectively participate in a musical experience of discovery with each other. As Lori Custedoro (2007) eloquently says: “in collective improvisatory performances we attend to musical invitations that emanate from both music and milieu” (p. 77). Improvisers’ invitations, responses and synchronic acts within groups are ethical inasmuch as they involve the different kinds of relations, which they act on.

For community musicians and teachers of all kinds, music improvisation is both a fundamental musical impulse and an image of thought that suggests an ethical disposition. The act of music improvisation can be seen as a ‘voice’ or collection of ‘voices’ that emerge within a community of difference. In the course of a group improvisation, the group forges pathways of meaningful expression; this amounts to a becoming. We (community music facilitators and participators) engage in ‘musical dialogues’ that distinctively re-emerge in the play of our own events. These dialogues consist of particular dynamic (political, forceful, powerful) and expressive (nuanced, affective) returning ‘refrains’ of events (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Our aim, as community artists, is to keep the refrain open to a range of artistic possibilities—to keep

the improvisation alive and meaningful so that it retains a free relation with its own variations.

Improvisation, as a community music strategy and as a mode of music making, holds the potential to raise ethical awareness and sensibility. Playing and improvising in a group together, can be seen as a cultural space that affirms interconnected and intersecting practices drawn from a range of histories and sources, realized in real time. This kind of setting is ideally suited to situations where there is a pressing need for differences in a group to be affirmed, valued and acknowledged; be they cultural, ethnic, gender, personality, disability or other differences. It thus sits comfortably as a community music strategy in contemporary settings such as urban contexts that reflect migrancy, nomadism, displacement and disconnection; offering hope and acceptance through musical action.

Consider a group music improvisation workshop in an urban setting with participants from different migrant and economic contexts. The workshop enables the participants to offer musical ideas in a safe and encouraging environment that are then taken up and explored in the group as a whole. The pedagogy of improvisation thus begins to embody the acceptance of cultural difference, the shared learning that emerges through intercultural dialogue, and the hope of a socially just urban community.

Ethics: A critical questioning approach

In this section I outline some ways in which community musicians and other musicians and teachers can begin to question the nature and value of their work from a critical and ethical perspective. Questions of ethics serve to illuminate and define

particular qualities of community music and assist creative and critical action in community music activity.

‘What’ questions

Ethical questions of the ‘what’ kind seek to understand and evaluate the kinds of values and virtues that underpin community music activity. Community musicians can identify specific values and virtues that arise in and through their music experiences and activities. These include values like participation, inclusion, justice, hospitality, diversity, care, love, sharing, social connectedness, difference, democracy, excellence, and virtues like negotiability, confidence, respect, trust, responsiveness, listening, leadership, facilitation, and encouragement, among others. These values and virtues may be universal (for instance, the values of participation or care may be considered irrefutable), or specific and situational—as in pertaining as necessary and important for a particular group (for instance to build confidence if the group requires it).

‘What’ questions don’t always remain constant and need to be worked on over time. In difficult situations of change or dissension, a community music facilitator may need to reassess the ongoing nature and focus of the rhizomatic direction of the group and consider the kinds of values or virtues that are most life-affirming. Once again, the notion of *eudaimonia* or human flourishing is useful here as a fluid concept that can be a source of inspiration—considering the question: what flourishing is possible here for these people? In this way, ‘what’ judgments can be specific and situational and considered in relation to a changing ethos of a group. ‘What’ ethical questions require a degree of critical awareness and judgment about the values that underpin a community music

activity and the virtues the people are embodying.

Criticality is related to agency in community music ethics. Agency can be thought about in an emancipatory way, in the sense of taking action that makes a critical difference with respect to inequitable, unfair or unjust social conditions. In Freirean terms, agency begins with a critical consciousness—a kind of knowledge and awareness that leads to actions that ensure that difference is noticed and affirmed (Freire, 2000). The process of becoming more aware of the critical consciousness of a group and its potential can be facilitated with a ‘what’ ethical question. Agency does not have to be seen only as individual agency, but can be realized in terms of community agency. Freire saw this collective form of agency as dialogue that required a certain kind of ethical disposition: “Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is a logical consequence” (Freire, 2000, p. 91).

‘When’ questions

Ethical questions that consider matters of process and timing are ‘when’ questions. They are also situational, in that the timing of ethical judgments and actions is always dependent on the changing situation of a group; the mood, environment and collective musical place and time a group finds themselves in. What is ‘good’ or ‘right’ in one time, may not be ‘good’ or ‘right’ in another; for a group will change, grow and develop over time, and exercise different kinds of ethical actions accordingly. It could be timely, for instance, to change the leadership of a community music group, in the interests of the sustainability of the group over a period of time. This could require the

decision to mentor and guide other group members into a place and space where they could take on more responsibility and care for the group.

Community music interventions operate from the point of view of ‘when’ ethics. These interventions respond to particular needs that arise in a community at particular points of time. For example, in recent years Auckland, New Zealand, like many other parts of the world, has seen a wave of migrancy from East Asian countries. As a result, a program assisting Korean young mothers and their babies to learn English through music and singing has been developed. The intervention comes at a time when the need is discerned through the circumstances of a Korean community settling into a new culture. ‘When’ ethics is always associated with *ethical action*, with the initiating of something in response to a call, or a need, which should be addressed in a particular moment of time.

‘Why’ Questions

‘Why’ ethical questions seek to inquire into the conditions and contexts of potential community music happenings. There may be pressing ethical reasons for a community music program to become established. ‘Why’ questions help us ascertain injustices, needs, changes and historical circumstances that put particular community circumstances into relief and highlight why interventions or programs are necessary. Countries like Aotearoa New Zealand are examples of postcolonial societies that have indigenous and migrant populations, which have been subject to historical injustices and colonization. Knowledge of these historical contexts point to potential community music possibilities and action. In the Aotearoa New Zealand experience it has been important for indigenous Māori to establish their own forms of community music expression led by,

and for Māori in direct response to dissatisfaction with colonial systems of intervention that have been in some cases destructive. For a time in the 1930s, Māori were punished for using their own language—*te reo Māori* in schools, resulting in the near destruction of the language. Nowadays, Māori have community music programs (*haka*) that use music to restore and encourage *te reo Māori* both in schools and in other community settings. These music interventions have been a direct consequence of the development of a Māori critical consciousness about the historical circumstances of the Māori people and the subsequent political action taken to restore *te reo Māori*, the Māori language.

‘Why’ questions also look at the potential ethical consequences of community music action. In some instances there is a specific and pressing need for community music facilitators and music cultural workers to exercise their moral duty to act, sometimes in ways that may be against their own cultural norms or expectations, but in the interests of their cultural community. Community music activity can result in dissention and division due to the diversity of needs in groups and the difficulties of processes that appear to favor some individuals over others. In such circumstances the potential consequences of decisions and actions become the focus of questioning and consideration. Participatory choirs and singing groups, for instance, value inclusivity regardless of the ability of individuals to sing in tune. To someone who can sing in tune, standing next to another singer who is singing out of tune can be a musically unsatisfying experience. However the community choir’s values of participation and inclusiveness may be thought to be more important than the musical inconvenience of ‘out-of-tuneness’. A ‘why’ question seeks to explore and affirm the reasons behind the values a group wants to affirm, over and above other issues. It may be much more important to

accept the out-of-tune singer in the group than attend to the short term musical needs of the more musically able choir members. The values of participation and inclusion bring tolerance, sociality and acceptance...these are attributes that lead to human flourishing and a greater sense of community ethos. Patience also leads to improved musicianship, and over time the more musically capable choir members can begin to value the improvements made by the 'out of tune' singers.

'How' questions

Music is a process art form, and careful attention needs to be placed on how musical action takes place. From an ethical point of view musical actions of all kinds can be valuable: performing and listening (which are inherent sharing activities), listening together (sharing of listening experiences, and the recognition of different listening insights), composing and performing (creative offerings of the composer and acts of service provided by the performers), co-composing in groups (which involves negotiation and acceptance of difference), and improvisation of all kinds (as mentioned above), especially group improvisation. Improvisation as a musical/ethical mode of interaction suggests a more agile and responsive kind of pedagogy than is often experienced in formal school settings. Each of these music modalities carry the potential for ethical insight and experience.

In terms of pedagogy, a community musician has a number of ethical choices to make in terms of how a group will function, create and learn musical material. It is important to note here that the traditional master-apprentice paradigm of musical transmission can be a deeply ethical experience for both master and apprentice. Key to

this experience is perhaps not the over use or abuse of power and control on the part of the master musician (which does unfortunately occur), but the more dialogical, sharing experience that can arise through genuine mentoring relationships. Direct instruction and direct modeling may be necessary at times, as this is the fastest way for a group to up-skill and become capable of performing and sharing music independently of the leader. Leadership style—how a leader leads—can also become an ethically important pedagogical feature; dialogical or collaborative styles can install a sense of ownership and shared meaning in a group. Leaders and community participants may draw from a range of ways and means to be ethically active, this may include making rational decisions based on known historical facts and critical awareness through to perceptive emotions and sensitivities to other participants' needs and desires. Noddings' (1984, 2012) ideas about the need to be attentive and receptive to the relation of care are pertinent here—how one acts in response to the basic care relation one has with others.

'Who' Questions

I know wherein our most basic value judgments are rooted—in compassion, in our sense for the suffering of others. (Marcuse, cited in Habermus, 1985, p 77)

Community music is particularly attuned to the offerings, concerns and becomings of others; particularly those in need and suffering. For this reason 'who' questions are among the most important ethical questions we can make in community music settings. Higgins' (2012) expression of hospitality sourced from Derrida (2000) encapsulates the ethical nature of the care and concern for the other person, expressed in

terms of absolute hospitality and unconditional acceptance. There is an underlying humanistic principle in community music that should not be forgotten or negated. It involves a promise of acceptance, and a willingness to help and work with people in the areas of need and desire. This concern for others is also reflected in Noddings' (1984) concept of care and Silverman's (2012b) notion of love-in-action in community music acts.

Egoism and self-interest are common attributes in today's society and there is widespread concern about the way in which neoliberalism affects the inner workings of education, culture and the arts, and in treating people primarily as financial units in the global marketplace. It is even more pressing now than then, that community musicians and researchers begin to clearly articulate their critical vision of community with a broader context of global, economic rationalism.

'Where' questions

A final critical area of questioning—'where' questions—focuses on the location of where ethical action can be positioned and actioned. On the one hand our ethical focus can be orientated conceptually, emotionally, aesthetically or spiritually in a place or cultural space. On the other hand, our ethical focus can be orientated in a physical or geographical place or locality. Both orientations are important for community musicians and facilitators so that they can critically and sensitively reflect on where these orientations should be realized in praxis.

Noddings' (1984) notion of care clearly articulates that care is located not with the individual or collective but with the relation between the carer and the cared for.

Noddings reminds us that care is ontologically basic, and so the very existence of the bond that connects a community sets up the potential for a caring relation to flourish. Care is thus not in one person or the other, but in the act of care that connects one to the other. She then unpacks how a caring relation can be realized, for instance through being attentive and receptive to the needs of the other person. Similarly, the notion of hospitality and the welcome in the community music act (Higgins, 2012) locates the idea of community in the space of conditional and unconditional hospitality and the welcoming acceptance of the other. This fluid and ethically sensitive space of negotiation between conditional and unconditional intentions determines the quality and resonance of the community music experience. Moreover others may locate the source of their community ethics with their sense of God, and draw ethical inspiration from the divine or spiritual aspect of a community and spiritual togetherness.

From a geographical perspective the ethical location of community music can be diverse and indeed the source of debate. One location that has been advocated for is community music outside formal school and institutions. There are important historical reasons for this position: a mistrust with the power structures of formal education, the hegemony of structural education agendas that lie outside community music values (for instance the requirement for a prescribed curriculum, assessment and reporting of performance outcomes), and the increasing commodification and marketization of schools, universities and research through the processes of neoliberalism. From an ethical perspective the sustainability and preservation of community music as a 'free form', away from the restraints of institutionalization has been regarded by some as an important reason to position community music away from schooling. This position seeks

to protect the *Gemeinschaft* (natural community) from *Gesellschaft* (organised/systemized community) and has been instrumental in helping the field of community music establish a clear identity beyond institutionalized music education.

Another ethical position locates community music both within schools and outside them. Certainly there are strong ethical reasons why this might be preferred. Does community music have anything to offer schools and universities? Community music ethics certainly apply to school contexts as well— ‘structured school music’ communities of practice arise and develop both in the curriculum and outside it. There are also international differences in schooling that come into play. In postcolonial societies schools are often places where community ideas flourish and where community identities can be protected and affirmed. Such is the case in Aotearoa New Zealand where a strong ethos of Māori and Pacific Island music is celebrated, affirmed and built into the cultural fabric of education. A critical and ethical consideration of the places and spaces of community music can thus illuminate this perspective, taking into account the variety of issues and concerns that are relevant to each circumstance.

Conclusion

Ethical considerations of community music are important for the ongoing sustainability, vitality and internationalization of the field. An ethical perspective of community music provides insights into how it can flourish and develop. In this chapter I have suggested that ethical considerations and reflections should be critically informed and that a questioning approach can assist in a clearer vision of the possibilities of community music action. Ethics, the way we should act with one another, is at the heart

of community music and should be celebrated as a key feature of community music activity. Community music, as an ethical music form, has an important role in addressing concerns in society and in bringing the 'ethical' back to music making and education.

Groups such as the International Society of Music Education (ISME) Commission on Community Music Activity (CMA) have led to a greater understanding of community music as an international field. Transnational discussions have highlighted the fact that community music is developed and fostered through different political, historical, cultural and economic contexts across the globe. Similarities of conditions across nations and regions are also apparent, such as the experiences of community music education in postcolonial countries. A questioning of ethics within the situational context of each community music form will help ensure that the specific nuances and regional/local aspects of community life inform the needs and creative directions of community music action in that area. This may include different perspectives on things such as the role of the school in community music and the place of different musical traditions in the affirmation of cultural expression and identity. A questioning of ethics also brings out the idea that communities are not merely homogeneous affairs of shared beliefs, but groups of expressions of difference, diversity and change. Ethical inquiries assist in helping community musicians discern the contexts of change in their communities so they can plan for ethical action through the powerful medium of music.

Reflective questions

1. What is ethical about: (i) music and (ii) community music?
2. Why should ethical considerations about community music be critically informed?

3. What are the important ethical issues in modern society that community music can potentially impact on?
4. What community-ethics projects would you like to be involved with, and what values and virtues would you seek to embody?
5. Where is there the most need for community music in your community?
6. How can the philosophy of ethics aid our understanding of community music?
7. What ethical attributes and actions are required to sustain community music?

Notes

1. See two recent issues in *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music* volume 11, issue 1 and issue 2 (2012) for a range of interesting discussions on ethics and music education.

Available: http://act.maydaygroup.org/php/archives_v11.php#11_1

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