



Building Interdisciplinary Bridges Across Cultures

## Trevor Wiggins

### Abstract

Ethnomusicology and anthropology have changed significantly in 200 years in the ways that they view the 'other', particularly those who are sources of indigenous cultural information. The practices of 'multicultural education' were often criticised for (amongst other things) using material from other cultures with little knowledge of the culture and perhaps, not even an understanding of the meaning of the words of a song or the context in which it might be appropriate. Teachers were often criticised for using material like this without further enquiry. However, the song in question might be one of the few sources available to them and we should credit those teachers for the wish to understand more about other cultures. Without representing these changes as a poorly supported 'ascent of man' model, we are now trying to move beyond these approaches and explore an 'intercultural' approach, where we meet in a space that acknowledges what the two (or more) parties bring and the cultural information that may, or may not, be accessed and understood. One of the precepts of an intercultural education proposed by the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is that it, 'It promotes equality and human rights and challenges unfair discrimination'. This presentation will consider what might be appropriate considerations and good practice for equality in intercultural exploration and work. Rather than considering a multitude of possible practices and appearing to critique educators, it will use a case study approach, reviewing a video recording of two brief sections of the Roman Catholic Mass recorded in St Theresa's Minor Basilica, Nandom, Ghana on 22nd November 2015—appropriately, St Cecilia's day. The occasion is, by its nature, intercultural as it brings together religious beliefs and practices from Europe with indigenous African music and words. In analysing and deconstructing both the diachronic and contemporary contextual, musical and dance components of the occasion, we may understand the cultural strands in play. From this, we may consider what level of equality between the components or contributors is necessary for good practice in interculturality. Recognising that, in some circumstances, inequality may seem like neo-colonialism, it is important that we consider how we can guard against such charges and avoid an excellent idea with good intentions being roundly condemned for poor practice.

### Bio

Trevor Wiggins is an independent musician/researcher based in the UK. His diverse academic career has included studies in music, music education and music analysis, leading to a PhD exploring issues for music and education in West Africa. He has published books, articles and CDs on topics that include pedagogic materials through music education

to ethnomusicology and world music. His area of specialist research focuses particularly on the music and culture of the Dagara people of northern Ghana. He has a particular interest in the way(s) that people interact with, perceive and manipulate cultural materials. He co-edited (with Prof. P.S. Campbell), the Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures (2013), and has just completed a 5-year term as co-editor of Ethnomusicology Forum.