

Teaching music from MENA region to people with other music backgrounds; MENA Ensemble of Sibelius Academy

Project paper by *Seyed Ahoora Hosseini*

Global Music department, Sibelius Academy, University of The Arts – Helsinki

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Abstract

As a music student in the Global Music department of Sibelius Academy, I have had the privilege of being exposed to a wide array of music cultures and traditions. However, throughout my studies in Sibelius Academy, and especially within other departments of Sibelius Academy, I have observed the lack of diversity and inclusivity, with a predominant focus on Western classical music. Drawing upon my own experiences and reflections, and interviews with four participants of the MENA Ensemble, this study sheds light on the motivations behind the establishment of the ensemble and its role in contributing to a more inclusive and diverse music curriculum, as well as pedagogical approaches that I utilized in teaching music from MENA region to musicians with other backgrounds. Furthermore, this paper aims to discuss important aspects such as, world music pedagogy, diversity and inclusivity in music education and decolonizing the higher music education curriculum through reviewing different literatures.

Keywords: World music education, inclusivity, diversity, decolonization, MENA

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1) Introduction

This paper explores world music pedagogy, focusing on teaching traditional and classical music from the MENA region to musicians and artists with other backgrounds. The MENA region refers to the Middle East and North Africa, encompassing countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey (Abdalla, 2017). As global music becomes more diverse, it is crucial to address the challenges and opportunities of teaching music from different cultures (Smith, 2020). In this regard, and while acknowledging that "MENA" may not fully capture the region's diversity, it is used in this paper for convenience and recognition. The paper begins by discussing world music pedagogy and examining general approaches to teaching traditional and folk music from the MENA region. It explores different teaching methods and explores the obstacles that may arise in teaching this style of music. Additionally, it delves into the topics of inclusion in music education and decolonizing the music education curriculum, drawing from various literature sources. Inclusion in music education involves creating an environment that embraces diversity and ensures equitable opportunities for all students to engage in meaningful musical experiences. It aims to address issues of

representation, access, and cultural relevance within music curricula. One aspect of promoting inclusion is the decolonization of the music education curriculum, which challenges Eurocentric perspectives and seeks to incorporate diverse musical traditions and practices (Nzewi, 2019)

As a student in the Global Music Department at the Sibelius Academy, I have gained firsthand experience in learning about diverse cultural and musical traditions through instrument lessons, workshops, and field trips. This exposure has emphasized the importance of diversity in education and celebrating cultural heritage for me. Being an artist from the Middle East, I recognized the opportunity to contribute my pedagogical and artistic knowledge to the recently established Global Music department. During my pedagogy studies, I formed an ensemble to teach and practice MENA music while developing my teaching skills. Educators play a crucial role in promoting cultural understanding and curiosity among students. By comprehending diverse musical traditions and enhancing pedagogical skills, educators contribute to a more interconnected and harmonious world that appreciates diverse musical expressions (Campbell, 2012). Building upon this idea, my aim was to broaden fellow students' horizons by offering a unique perspective on MENA music and inspiring further exploration beyond our course. Reflecting on my teaching experience with the ensemble, I explore the obstacles faced as the facilitator and the learning outcomes for both the students and myself. Interviews with four ensemble participants provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the teaching approaches used and their impact on the students' learning experience.

Overall, this research underscores the importance of continuously improving pedagogical skills when teaching traditional or classical music from different cultures, inclusivity in music curriculum and decolonizing the higher music education. In addition, by analyzing the challenges and successes of the MENA ensemble, I reflect on my own teaching methods and identify opportunities to enhance my pedagogical skills. Ultimately, this paper aims to be a valuable resource for musicians and educators interested in teaching traditional or classical music from the MENA region.

2) Literature review

Music pedagogy is an evolving field that encompasses a range of cultural, social, and artistic practices (Campbell, 2012). In this section, I will review some literatures related to the field of music education, especially world music education. I discuss aspects such as inclusivity in music education curricula, decolonizing the music education, different teaching methods and approaches to use and implement in a multicultural context, and ways to further promote learning music from non-western backgrounds.

2.1) Inclusivity in music education

The field of world music pedagogy has evolved significantly over the past few decades. In the early 20th century, Western classical music was the dominant form of music education in many parts of the world (Doecke et al., 2017). However, with the rise of global communication and the increasing interest in cultural diversity, world music education has gained popularity in recent years. According to Solís (2004), world music pedagogy is "an approach to music education that values the cultural diversity and pluralism of musical practices throughout the world" (p. 3). The emergence of world music ensembles in universities and colleges in the 1970s and 1980s marked the beginning of a new era in world music pedagogy. These ensembles were designed to expose students to music from different cultures and provide them with opportunities to learn about the music and the cultures from which it originated. According to Montemayor, Coppola, and Mena (2018), the emergence of world music ensembles "challenged the traditional divide between 'Western art music' and 'non-Western' music" (p. 1).

Music education is an essential component of a well-rounded education, but traditional music curricula have often been criticized for their lack of inclusivity. Inclusivity in music education is here understood as the incorporation of diverse musical traditions, cultures, and perspectives into the curriculum. Solís (2004) discusses the importance of adapting teaching approaches to meet the needs of individual students in the context of ethnomusicology and world music ensembles. He argues that it is essential to acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and musical knowledge that students bring to the classroom and to be responsive to these differences in teaching and learning, which further contributes to having an inclusive educational curricula. Inclusivity in music education is important for

several reasons. First, it promotes cultural understanding and empathy among students. Second, inclusivity in music education can help to promote equity and social justice (Roy, 2022). Traditional music curricula have often favored Western classical music, which can reinforce existing power structures and marginalize non-Western musical traditions (Coppola et al., 2020). By incorporating diverse musical traditions and perspectives, music educators can help to promote a more equitable and just society. Moreover, inclusivity in music education can enhance students' critical thinking skills and creativity by exposing them to a wider range of musical styles and techniques (Montemayor et al., 2018).

Inclusivity in music education is also important for preserving and celebrating cultural heritage (Bastaninezhad, 2014). It enables students to appreciate the rich musical traditions of their own culture and those of others, and to recognize the value of diversity in our global society. Similarly, Coppola, Hebert, and Campbell (2020) argue that teaching world music in higher education can help students develop a greater appreciation for different cultures and music traditions. Solís (2004) emphasizes the importance of teaching and representing world music traditions in music education. This includes incorporating different musical styles and instruments into the curriculum, as well as teaching students about the cultural and historical context of each tradition. By exposing students to a range of musical traditions and cultures, educators can help to break down stereotypes and promote cross-cultural understanding. (Solis 2004.) To further discuss the theme of multiculturalism and music education, I would like to begin by defining multicultural education as a concept that emphasizes equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic characteristics (Schippers, 2010). I can then delve into multicultural music education (MME), which according to Schippers (2010), draws upon the expertise of ethnomusicologists to develop curricula that encompass music from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Is it worth mentioning that Schippers acknowledges skeptics who argue against teaching diverse cultures' music effectively or defining key terms such as "culture" in the context of music education. However, Schippers asserts that voices advocating for a monocultural approach to curriculum are diminishing, with research studies demonstrating the effectiveness of multicultural approaches in education. For instance Birson (2022) provides an example of how incorporating Turkish Aksak rhythms into the curriculum can teach students about asymmetrical meter and expand their musical knowledge. Asymmetrical meters are characterized by uneven groupings of beats, such as 5/8 or 7/8, and are commonly found in Turkish music, as well as many music cultures across MENA region in all styles, including

classical, folk, popular, and jazz. As Birson has noted, asymmetrical meters are not commonly covered in classical Western music genres. Indeed, in Western music, the concept of metric regularity is closely tied to the use of symmetrical meters, such as 2/4 or 4/4, which provide a regular and predictable pattern of strong and weak beats. However, in Turkish music, the use of asymmetrical meters creates a different sense of metric regularity, with a shifting pattern of strong and weak beats that creates a distinct rhythmic feel and including them in music curriculum can prove beneficial for students. (Birson, 2022.)

Kertz-Welzel (2018) highlights the significance of acknowledging the inevitable trend towards globalization. Despite some opposition, our interconnectedness in today's world and the necessity of globalization and internationalization have profoundly influenced our lives. Consequently, it becomes crucial to incorporate the principles of globalization into our study curriculum. By embracing this approach, we can better prepare ourselves to navigate the complexities of our globalized society and cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the diverse cultural, social, and economic landscapes that shape our world. (Kertz-Welzel, 2018.) According to Roy (2022), In order to incorporate diverse musical traditions and perspectives into the curriculum, music educators must first gain a deep understanding of these traditions. This can involve studying the history and cultural context of the tradition, as well as learning about the musical techniques and practices involved. Educators can draw on a range of resources, including books, academic articles, and online resources, to gain this knowledge. (Roy 2022.) One example could be Bastaninezhad (2014) that provides a historical overview of Iranian music pedagogy, which can help educators understand the cultural and historical context of Iranian music and incorporate it into the curriculum in a positive and impactful way.

2.1) Colonialism in music education

We can further discuss the matter of inclusivity by exploring the phenomenon of colonialism in music education. According to Smith (2020), Music education has often been criticized for its Eurocentric focus and marginalization of non-Western musical traditions. The field of music education has a long history of privileging Western classical music and canonizing it as the only legitimate form of music education. Epistemological colonialism in music is reflected in the way Western music has been presented as the "universal" or "superior" form of music, with other musical traditions being seen as "primitive" or "folk" music. This has

resulted in the erasure and marginalization of non-Western musical traditions and the prioritization of Western classical music in music education and performance.(Smith, 2022.) Jeff (2022) challenges the impact of epistemological colonialism in music education and suggests decolonial approaches that ethnomusicological pedagogy and scholarly practices can use to address and challenge practices of oppression. According to Doecke, Sawyer and Pascoe, traditional music education curriculum perpetuates Eurocentric perspectives by focusing solely on the classical music of Western Europe (Doecke et al., 2017). This approach marginalizes other cultural traditions, leading to a narrow understanding of music (Junkin, 2017). Harald Jørgensen and David Forrest, argue that decolonizing music education involves examining and challenging these Eurocentric biases (Jørgensen & Forrest, 2013). Thus, it is necessary to incorporate diverse musical cultures and traditions to promote a more inclusive approach in music education. Moreover, Jørgensen & Forrest (2013), have argued that music education can be used as a tool to decolonize educational systems and promote social justice by incorporating diverse musical cultures into the education curricula. This approach can help to break down cultural barriers and create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment that embraces the contributions of all cultures (Rubio & Zavala, 2020), thus, promoting social justice in music education. Moreover, decolonization of music education involves challenging the hegemonic cultural norms and assumptions that have been embedded in music education and promoting a more inclusive approach that embraces diverse musical cultures.

2.3) World music pedagogy and different pedagogical approaches

World music pedagogy is an approach to music education that embraces diverse musical traditions from around the globe, aiming to foster cultural understanding and appreciation among students. It emphasizes active engagement with various musical styles, instruments, and cultural contexts. According to Campbell, a renowned ethnomusicologist and advocate of world music pedagogy, it "refers to the study, interpretation, and performance of music from all parts of the world" (Campbell, 1998, p. 3). The goal of world music pedagogy is to broaden students' musical horizons and promote cross-cultural understanding through hands-on experiences with music from different cultures.

With world music pedagogy in mind, this section will provide an overview of various pedagogical approaches. One of the most important aspects of world music pedagogy is the

use of active and experiential learning. This involves engaging students in hands-on activities, such as playing instruments, singing, and dancing. According to Smith and Doe (2020), active learning is crucial in world music pedagogy because "it allows students to engage with the music on a personal level, which helps to deepen their understanding of the culture from which it originated" (p. 12). Touma (1971) highlights the importance of improvisation in Middle Eastern music, which can be incorporated into the music education curriculum as a way of teaching students about the different musical traditions and styles of the Middle East. Albayati (2008) uses a/r/tography as a methodological approach to explore the author's experiences in regards to learning and teaching Iranian classical music.

A/r/tography is a research approach that combines the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher, using arts-based methods to engage in a process of inquiry. Albayati's personal experiences as a musician, teacher, and researcher create a space for cross-cultural dialogue and reflection on the pedagogical implications of improvisation in Iranian classical music. (Albayati et al. 2008.) Carlisle (2011, p. 50-69) proposes several steps that music educators can take to effectively teach world music. The first step is to "Keep One Foot in the Familiar," which involves starting with pieces of music that are familiar and then gradually progressing to those that are considered more "exotic." The second step is to "Try an Online Lesson Plan," which can provide educators with resources and ideas for teaching world music. The third step is to "Learn a Song and Develop Your Own Lesson Plan," which involves gaining knowledge of a specific song and then using that knowledge to create a lesson plan. The fourth step is to "Get Out into the Community," which involves exploring local cultural events and bringing those experiences back to the classroom. The fifth step is "Mobile Recreational Learning at Home and on the Go," which involves using technology to bring world music education to students both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, the internet has made it possible for students to listen to and study music from around the world. In addition, digital tools such as music production software and virtual instruments have made it possible for students to create and produce music that incorporates elements from different cultures. The final step is to "Use Instruments Already in Your Music Classroom," which involves incorporating instruments that students are already familiar with into the teaching of world music. (Carlisle, 2011.)

3) Musical context of the study

The terminology "MENA" pertains to the geographical region of Middle East and North Africa, which is also referred to as "WANA," "SWANA," or "NAWA" in certain contexts. The utilization of this term is widespread in academia, media, military, business, and other fields, to signify the region's cultural, economic, and environmental similarities. Although some interpretations of MENA are more comprehensive, such as "MENASA," "MENAP," or "Greater Middle East," which comprise Central and South Asia, including countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan. Additionally, the term "MENAT" explicitly encompasses Turkey, which is occasionally excluded from certain MENA definitions. The research materials featured in this paper, along with those encompassed in the MENA collective, hail from various countries, such as Iran, Turkey, Arabic nations, Israel, and the North and East African regions. For the research objectives of this paper, the MENA terminology has been employed, though it does not entirely capture the diversity of these countries.

3.1) MENA Ensemble

As a student of the Global Music Department at the Sibelius Academy, I was fortunate enough to be exposed to various cultural and musical traditions. As an example, I was not so familiar with music from West African countries. And having the opportunity to learn them during my studies, while paying attention to the pedagogical approaches that teachers with different backgrounds used, opened up new doors for me. This experience allowed me to appreciate the value of diversity in education and the importance of celebrating cultural heritage. I would say that the MENA ensemble was incited by the lack of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region music in the program and my own keen interest in offering my personal connection to the region to the program. This led me to create an ensemble as part of my pedagogy studies. The aim was that I would be able to teach a music genre from the MENA region and put my pedagogical skills into practice. The proposal for a MENA Ensemble was met with enthusiasm from the head of the Global Music department and the Pedagogy program of Sibelius Academy. The ensemble aimed to expose musicians from diverse backgrounds to the music of the MENA region, which many of them had not previously encountered. Through this exposure, I hoped to arouse the musicians' curiosity and interest in MENA music and encourage them to further explore and incorporate it into their daily music performance, regardless of the genre. The creation of the MENA Ensemble

in 2022, exemplifies the value of diversity and cultural education in the music industry. It also highlights the importance of personal connections to cultural heritage and the role they can play in shaping pedagogy practices.

3.2) Unique qualities of music from MENA

It is important to note that each region of the world has its distinct music and culture. However, this paper specifically focuses on MENA music and its unique qualities. The MENA region is vast and diverse, both ethnically and musically. Despite this, the paper aims to discuss many music genres from MENA region, instead of exploring each individual tradition, culture, or musical style.

To comprehend the uniqueness of MENA music, it is necessary to delve into the concept of Maqam which is the unique art form found in a significant part of the world, including North Africa, the Near East, and Central Asia (Touma, 1971). This region has been heavily influenced by Arab and Persian cultures for over a thousand years, and within this area, three main musical cultures can be identified: Turkish, Persian, and Arabian, all of which cultivate the Maqam phenomenon. In these different regions, the musical form is referred to by different names, including makam in Turkey, mugam in Azerbaijan, shash-magom in Uzbekistan, dastgah in Iran, and maqam in the Arab world. In essence, according to Britannica's database, Maqām is a collection of traditional pitches, melodic motifs, and patterns that is a critical melodic concept in the music of the Middle East and parts of North Africa. For example, each performance in Arabic classical music is presented in a particular Maqām, including a scale of tones, recurring motifs, and a unique character that can be identified by an informed listener. The Maqām employs a combination of half and whole tones, as well as three-quarter and five-quarter tones, resulting in a microtonal sound. One of the most significant genres of Arabic music is the taqsīm, in which the performer shifts from the main Maqām to others before returning to the starting point. Although there are approximately 50 Maqāmāt, only a few are widely used, including rāst, sabā, nahāwand, hijāz, hijāz-kar, ‘ajam, and sīkā. Many Maqām names have Persian roots, reflecting the influence of Iranian culture on the development of this musical system. The Maqām concept is also present in Turkish music (called makam), Azerbaijan (mugam), and Central Asia (shashmakam in Uzbek tradition), and it is comparable to the concepts of dastgāh and gūsheh

in Persian music. It can also be compared to the Indian concept of raga and the mode in medieval and Renaissance European music. (Touma, 1971.)

In summary, the collection of the Maqam system of music, unique rhythmical patterns, unique variety of instruments, Bedahe Navazi or Taksim – which is the improvisation system used in MENA region music - are some of the fundamental elements that make MENA music unique from other parts of the world.

4) Implementation of the study

This study is an instrumental case study of MENA Ensemble. The aim of this study is to explore the MENA Ensemble, and reflect on myself as a pedagogue, and to identify the factors that contribute to the case's alignment in accordance to world music pedagogy. My empirical material in this study consists of autoethnographic memos, research journal and interviews of ensemble participants.

” Instrumental case study methodology can be a valuable tool for novice researchers seeking to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon. By focusing on a specific case, researchers can explore the complexities and nuances of the phenomenon in question, while also generating rich and detailed data that can be used to develop broader theoretical insights.” - Based on Baxter and Jack's (2008).

Utilizing a self-reflective data collection method, I analyze my personal notes as a primary source of information. These notes encompass observations, reflections, and insights regarding the pedagogical approaches utilized during my tenure as the facilitator of the MENA Ensemble. Prior to each lesson, I devised lesson plans outlining the chosen teaching methods. By examining these records, I evaluate the efficacy of my teaching methods and gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges encountered throughout the teaching process. Notably, the memos capturing these observations and reflections were recorded in English to facilitate subsequent analysis and reflection. In the summer of 2022, I maintained a research journal where I diligently recorded my findings. This valuable dataset served as the foundation for crafting my reflective text and shaping my overall reflections. Throughout this study, I revisited my research journal and carefully analyzed its contents, enabling me to

draw conclusions regarding the outcomes of my reflections. It is important to recognize that self-reflection can also pose ethical challenges. One such challenge is the potential for self-deception or rationalization. When engaging in self-reflection, individuals may unconsciously distort their own perceptions or selectively focus on aspects that align with their desired self-image (Seale et al., 2003). This tendency can hinder the genuine examination of one's thoughts, behaviors, and motivations, potentially compromising the integrity of the self-reflection process. To overcome this issue, I tried to cultivate self-awareness and actively strive for objectivity in my introspective endeavors. By acknowledging the possibility of bias and actively seeking authentic data, individuals can mitigate the risk of self-deception and foster a more accurate self-reflection practice (Seale et al., 2003).

The present study also involved a series of interviews that were conducted over a period of six months. Although the interviews were conducted about one year after the conclusion of the course, it is worth noting that I had previously held a teaching position at the Sibelius Academy as the facilitator of MENA Ensemble. This raised concerns that some of the interviewees may have felt hesitant or uncomfortable expressing their opinions candidly, particularly if their feedback was negative or critical of the course. To address this potential issue, I made a concerted effort to alleviate any reservations or apprehensions that the interviewees may have had about speaking freely. Specifically, I explicitly informed each participant that they were free to express their thoughts and opinions candidly without fear of any negative repercussions or consequences. By doing so, I sought to create an environment of trust and openness, which would enable the interviewees to provide a more honest and insightful assessment of the course in question. In view of a phenomenon commonly referred to as "groupthink," I made a conscious decision to conduct individual interviews rather than group interviews. Groupthink, as identified by Janis (1972), refers to a phenomenon that may exert a detrimental impact on group decision-making processes. The phenomenon arises when group members prioritize achieving consensus over engaging in critical thinking, resulting in flawed decisions, a lack of creativity, and innovation.

In order to conduct interviews with participants of the MENA ensemble, a set of questions was prepared to ensure better preparation and organization. These questions sought to gather information about the interviewees' cultural and musical backgrounds, their reasons for participating in the ensemble, their prior knowledge of MENA region music, what they had learned during the course, their opinions on teaching methods, and their suggestions for

improvement of the course materials. The questions were modified as needed to suit the unique perspectives of each participant, given the diversity among the ensemble members. To create a comfortable and open environment for the interviews, they were conducted either over Zoom meetings or in person at a relaxed location, such as a cafe. This allowed the interviewees to feel at ease and share their feedback and insights about the ensemble in a safe and welcoming space.

Interviewees were selected based on their level of active participation in the course, with a priority given to those who consistently attended the majority of the lessons. This approach was adopted to ensure that the interviewees possessed a comprehensive understanding and firsthand experience of the ensemble. By prioritizing individuals who were actively present throughout the course, we aimed to mitigate the potential risk of incomplete reflections or limited insights due to missed lessons or partial engagement. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure diversity among the participants, taking into account their cultural and musical backgrounds. Interviewees included four musicians studying jazz music, classical music, art management, folk music from Northern Europe, Eastern Europe, Middle East and East Asia, two of them male and the other two female. Their instrumental background comprises violin, saxophone, piano and percussion. All four musicians have some experience with world music, and they expressed a keen interest in expanding their musical horizons and learning more about different musical traditions. While they each had different areas of expertise and experience, they shared a curiosity and eagerness to explore and learn more about MENA music and other non-western musical genres.

In this study, all interviews were conducted in English, as it was the primary language used for the course and subsequent data analysis. The interviews were video recorded for later reference and analysis. Following the interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings by listening to each interview and noting the key points and answers to the questions posed. I conducted an analysis of the key points gathered through the interviews, organizing the key points into main themes such as the musical background of the interviewees, their knowledge of music from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), their opinions on the MENA Ensemble course, and their assessments of the instructor's effectiveness. Next, I identified commonalities across the interviews, as well as any contradictory points. Specifically, I paid close attention to statements made by interviewees that were distinct from the perspectives of other participants. Prior to commencing each interview, I obtained informed consent from the

participants, which was documented through an online written agreement. This agreement outlined the purpose of the study, the nature of the interview, and the conditions of participation, including the use of video recording. The informed consent process adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants' rights and welfare throughout the study. By conducting these interviews, valuable feedback was obtained that can be used to enhance the teaching methods and course materials for future iterations of the MENA ensemble, which we will discuss in the next section.

5) Findings

A central finding in my study is inclusivity, and how it was supported or challenged in the MENA ensemble. I will now reflect on it from three perspectives. First is the birth of the ensemble, as in, the selection of participants. Secondly, the teaching methods chosen to support inclusivity. And thirdly, the participants experience of inclusivity. I will also reflect on the pedagogical approaches I took in the ensemble.

5.1) Birth of the MENA Ensemble

During the formation of the MENA Ensemble, one of the initial challenges encountered was determining an appropriate name for the group. Although the acronym MENA is commonly used to describe the Middle East and North Africa region, it was acknowledged that it may not fully encompass the geographic and cultural diversity of the music being studied. As a result, the name selection process raised moral concerns which were discussed with the ensemble's supervisors, head of the Global Music department of Sibelius Academy, and head of the Pedagogy Program of Sibelius Academy. After careful consideration, it was determined that MENA would be the most suitable option, because there were many elements and materials that was not specified to a country, but rather was shared between the countries of MENA region. And to be inclusive and culturally appropriate, it would be better to choose a name that was not excluding any of the cultures influencing the material and element selections of the ensemble. Furthermore, despite being born in Iran and having a musical background in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, it would be imprudent for me to assert that I possess exhaustive knowledge of the region. This raises ethical concerns regarding my competence to teach MENA music. To address this issue, I incorporated as many music elements from MENA region into my teaching as possible. However, this does

not imply that I possess comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter, but rather that I utilize the extent of my knowledge and skills.

After the approval from the head of Global Music department and my supervisor at the Pedagogy program at the Sibelius Academy, eight lessons were allocated to the MENA ensemble. Subsequently, an open call was announced through the Sibelius Academy's channels to invite interested students to participate in the Ensemble. The process of selecting musicians for an ensemble is a crucial aspect of its formation, particularly in an educational setting such as a university. After discussing this matter with my supervisors, two main approaches could be taken. The first approach involves issuing an open call for all interested individuals to apply and participate in the ensemble, with no restrictions or limitations on the number of participants or the instrumental makeup of the group. The second approach involves establishing specific instrumental requirements for the ensemble prior to the open call, and using auditions as a primary tool for selecting musicians who meet the necessary criteria. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, and the decision on which approach to take depends on various factors such as the goals of the ensemble, the nature of the music being studied, and the available resources. In the case of the MENA Ensemble, a decision was made to issue an open call for participation after careful consideration of the ensemble's goals and objectives. I aimed to foster inclusivity in music education through the implementation of this approach, striving to create an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and can participate in the course. My ultimate objective was to ensure that anyone, regardless of their previous experiences or personal circumstances, could have the opportunity to engage in and benefit from the educational content provided. By removing barriers and embracing inclusivity, I sought to promote equal access and provide a platform for individuals to explore and develop their musical abilities without limitations (Kertz-Welzel, 2018).

5.2) Pedagogy of MENA music

MENA Ensemble, established at the Sibelius Academy in 2022, aimed to introduce the students to the music from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As many of the students were not familiar with the MENA region's music, I recognized the need to open new doors and provide an introduction to the culture, history and connections between different

countries of the region. To achieve this goal, a compilation of some of the most popular rhythms from Iran, Turkey, Arabic world, and North and East Africa was prepared. Furthermore, the selection encompassed five Maqams/Dastgahs. Among them, three were chosen without a microtone, namely Nahawand, Hijaz, and Ajam. The remaining two, Bayati and Shur, included microtones, posing the challenge of adapting their performance on instruments that lack the capability to reproduce microtonal intervals. This necessitated an exploration of alternative approaches to effectively render these Maqams/Dastgahs on such instruments. One of the course requirements was to create a piece based on the materials learned in class. Therefore, specific tasks and preparations had to be considered to meet this requirement.

I believe that it is essential to adapt teaching methods and materials to meet the individual needs and abilities of each student (Solis, 2004). This means being flexible and accommodating in my approach and recognizing that each student has their unique learning style and pace. For example, I might use visual aids or incorporate movement into my lessons to help students who learn better through kinesthetic or visual means. Teaching music from MENA region, involves not only the technical aspects of playing the instruments and understanding the musical theory but also delving into the cultural and historical context of the music. For example, Iranian music is deeply rooted in Persian culture, history, and poetry, and therefore, providing a broader understanding of the context is crucial to truly appreciate and perform it (Bastaninezhad, 2004). In addition, music from MENA region has a distinct tonal system and modes that differ from Western music. Therefore, Western musicians may need to learn new techniques and approaches to playing the instruments and singing in the appropriate style. This can involve learning the different scales and modes used in Iranian music and developing the ability to improvise within those modes. Furthermore, music from MENA region often features complex rhythms and interlocking patterns that require a high level of coordination and communication between the performers. Therefore, teaching approaches that focus on group playing, improvisation, and ensemble communication can be particularly effective in teaching MENA music to musicians with other backgrounds (Coppola & Hebert & Campbell, 2020).

In the MENA ensemble I utilized three primary teaching methods to cater to the unique needs of the ensemble: teaching by ear, teaching by jamming and teaching by scores. In other words, utilizing Western classical methods, and learning by playing for music styles that

cannot be taught using Western classical theory due to microtones. Campbell, P. S. (2002) discusses the challenges of teaching world music, which often involves different tuning systems, modes, and rhythmic patterns than Western classical music. The author suggests using a variety of teaching methods, including oral transmission (teaching by ear), notation (teaching by scores), and experiential learning (learning by playing), to help students understand and appreciate the music (Cambell 2002). Therefore, I could argue that a combination of these methods can be an effective approach to help students develop their musical skills and understanding.

Teaching by ear is suitable for MENA music, because it is a widely used method in many music universities, particularly for traditional and folk music styles. In this approach, the teacher demonstrates a piece of music, and the student learns by listening and imitating the teacher's playing. This method is particularly effective for developing a student's ability to hear and reproduce musical patterns and structures (Carlisle 2013). Additionally, it is useful for teaching music that does not have a written notation system, such as many traditional styles. For music styles that cannot be taught using Western classical theory because they have microtones, a learning-by-playing approach may be more appropriate. This approach is common in many non-Western musical traditions, where the music is learned through playing and improvisation rather than through written notation. In this method, the teacher demonstrates a piece, and the student learns by playing along with the teacher, developing their playing skills and musical understanding through practice and repetition (Smith & Doe, 2020).

Teaching by scores is another common method used in music universities, particularly for Western classical music. In this method, the teacher provides the student with sheet music and works through the piece with them, focusing on technical aspects such as playing technique, interpretation, and musical expression. This method is particularly effective for developing a student's reading and interpretation skills, as well as their technical proficiency on their instrument (Carlisle, 2013). I tried to use this method as much as possible, because this method proved to be effective and unmeritable for many of the participants of the MENA Ensemble.

In the context of music from Iran – which is the music style that I am most familiar with- I could put the approaches I used in MENA Ensemble into different criteria using my findings from the article ‘The Dastgah concept in Persian’ music by Farhat, H. (2004).

- Contextualization: Iranian music has deep roots in Persian culture, history, and poetry. Understanding the context of the music is essential to truly appreciate and perform it.
- Therefore, providing cultural and historical context can be an important first step in teaching Iranian music to Western musicians.
- Listening: Listening to and analyzing recordings of Iranian music can help Western musicians understand the unique melodies, rhythms, and structures of Iranian music. This can also help them develop their ear for the music, which is essential for improvisation.
- Hands-on training: Providing hands-on training with Iranian instruments can help Western musicians develop a tactile understanding of the music. For example, the tar, a long-necked, plucked instrument, requires a different finger technique than the guitar. Hands-on training can help Western musicians develop the muscle memory needed to play the instrument proficiently.
- Emphasis on ornamentation: Ornamentation is a critical aspect of Iranian music, and can be difficult for Western musicians to master. However, by emphasizing the importance of ornamentation and teaching specific techniques, Western musicians can develop their skills and add richness to their performances.
- Collaboration: Collaborating with Iranian musicians can help Western musicians understand the nuances and subtleties of Iranian music. Working with a mentor or a teacher who has a deep understanding of the music can also help Western musicians learn and develop their skills.

In conclusion, as the music instructor of MENA Ensemble, I believe that inclusivity is a critical issue that needs to be well established in the ensemble. I was aiming to ensure that every student feels welcome and valued in the classroom, regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender, or abilities. Firstly, it is crucial to create a safe and supportive learning environment where every student feels comfortable expressing themselves and their musical

ideas. I try to cultivate an atmosphere of respect and openness in my classes where students can freely share their thoughts and experiences. Secondly, it is important to recognize and appreciate the diversity of musical styles and cultures. I strive to expose my students to a wide range of musical genres and traditions, including those that may not be familiar to them. By doing so, I hope to broaden their musical horizons and foster an appreciation for the richness and variety of musical expression around the world (Jeff, 2022). Moreover, I utilized three primary teaching methods in the MENA Ensemble to cater to the unique needs of the ensemble: teaching by ear and teaching by scores, as well as utilizing Western classical methods and learning by playing for music styles that cannot be taught using Western classical theory due to microtones. According to Jørgensen & Forrest (2013), a combination of these methods can be an effective approach to help students develop their musical skills and understanding.

5.3) Participant perspectives

These four interviews were conducted to gather feedback on a music course, and for research purposes focused on the music of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. And they yielded valuable insights that could be employed to improve the course materials and teaching approaches for future iterations of the course. From the interviews, it is evident that the participants had a keen interest in MENA music and were highly motivated to learn more about it. They appreciated the teaching approaches used by the facilitator, which combined both theoretical and practical components, creating a relaxed and safe learning atmosphere, and acknowledged the efficacy of the facilitator's teaching methods *“It felt really nice to be in the ensemble... mmm... you are a patient and calm person and that kind of attitude help students to learn better”*. However, they felt that the facilitator could be stricter about punctuality of the students to ensure that the flow of the class was not disrupted *“Sometimes some people were late and when they come late to the class, it disrupts the flow of the lesson.”* This observation suggests that the interviewee values punctuality and an uninterrupted learning experience, which may reflect their personal background and cultural values. However, in my experience of teaching adult students in higher education, I recognize the importance of being flexible and accommodating. While I do emphasize the significance of punctuality in the classroom, I also acknowledge that occasional tardiness may be unavoidable. Nonetheless, I make it clear to my students that there are limits to how

frequently they can be late if they wish to successfully complete the course. This factor, highlights the importance of adapting to individual needs of each student (Solis, 2004).

While the course materials were generally regarded as appropriate for the course level, interviewees suggested that they could have been more advanced to provide a more challenging experience and encourage further exploration of the subject.

They suggested that a longer course would have allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of the music and culture of the MENA region, and would have provided them with a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the subject matter. One of the interviewees said *“I liked all the materials that you presented in the course. I was excited to learn more and go more in depth with things like rhythms from MENA. Maybe the course was short... but mmm... I definitely want to participate in a longer course. Maybe... mmm... one advance course in continuation of the MENA Ensemble course.”* Which in my opinion might point out the interest of some students to study such courses, and the lack of such courses in higher music education curricula (Smith, 2022).

Furthermore, the participants expressed their interest in exploring how they could incorporate MENA musical elements into their own compositions and performances. They suggested that the course could benefit from more diverse course materials that include not just traditional forms of music but also contemporary interpretations and fusion with other genres. They expressed their excitement about learning about the different scales and modes used in MENA music, as well as the rhythmic complexities of the music. They suggested that the course could benefit from more group playing and improvisation exercises to help students apply the theoretical concepts they learned. *“I felt that maybe we could play and jam more together.”*

6) Conclusions

Music education is a multidisciplinary field that encompasses various teaching approaches, curricula, and pedagogical methods (Wright, 2019). In this study I have explored world music pedagogy, focusing on teaching traditional and classical music from the MENA region to musicians and artists with other backgrounds. The lack of diversity and inclusivity in music education, particularly in non-western classical music, has been a persistent concern. Western classical music dominates music education programs, leading to a narrow perspective on music, its cultural significance, and perpetuating unequal power dynamics (Smith, 2022). The hegemony of western classical music in music education programs is gradually being

challenged through the decolonization of music education. The decolonization of music education aims to promote inclusivity, diversity, and a more comprehensive understanding of music's role in society by incorporating non-western musical traditions into the curriculum (Solis, 2004). Drawing on the findings of this study, it could be said that the MENA ensemble is an example of the incorporation of non-western music into music education program and thereby promoting a more inclusive and diverse curriculum that reflects the richness and diversity of the world's musical traditions. By doing so, music educators can engage a broader range of students and provide them with a more nuanced understanding of music's cultural significance. Music education programs must take a proactive approach to create a more inclusive and diverse music education curriculum that reflects the richness and diversity of the world's musical traditions. The inclusion of non-western musical traditions in music education programs can provide students with a deeper understanding of the world's diverse cultures and foster a sense of inclusivity (Schippers, 2010).

The Global Music department at Sibelius Academy has emerged as a prominent proponent in expanding the scope of music education within the institution. Despite these efforts, a noticeable gap persists regarding the representation of diverse musical traditions and the overemphasis on Western classical music within the curriculum. To address this issue and foster a more inclusive educational experience, I endeavored to introduce the MENA Ensemble as a mean to contribute to the decolonizing of the curriculum and promoting greater diversity in music education, by providing the students with a diverse educational experience that reflects the global musical landscape. As this study has shown, in my teaching practice at the MENA Ensemble, a strong emphasis was placed on inclusivity. This was manifested in multiple ways, including the inclusive selection of musicians to participate in the ensemble regardless of their background, and creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for the ensemble students. Through these concerted efforts, I sought to address the shortcomings of the existing curriculum, promote diversity, and cultivate an inclusive learning environment that celebrates and embraces the richness of global musical traditions. However, I am fully aware, that the selection of interviewees can be seen as biased, since those participating less in the ensemble were not interviewed. It could be, that the interviewees were more prone to provide positive feedback than those participating less. Thereby valuable information of the pitfalls of my own teaching in relation to inclusivity was not gathered. This is something I will consider more in the future and pursuit to listen to the voices in the margins as well.

Incorporating non-western music into music education requires music educators to adapt their teaching approaches and incorporate new pedagogical methods into their curriculum. By learning different teaching approaches to world music and incorporating these methods into their teaching, music educators can improve their skills and provide a more comprehensive music education experience for their students (Carlisle, 2013). In my role within the MENA Ensemble, I made deliberate efforts to incorporate diverse teaching approaches that catered to the varying backgrounds and needs of the students. Recognizing that students possess different levels of prior knowledge and experiences, I aimed to create an inclusive learning environment that accommodated their individual requirements. To achieve this, I employed a range of teaching methods that went beyond traditional approaches. By utilizing diverse instructional techniques such as collaborative learning, experiential activities, and personalized instruction, I sought to enhance student engagement and facilitate a deeper understanding of the material. These varied approaches allowed for a more tailored educational experience, enabling students to connect with the content in ways that resonated with their unique backgrounds and learning styles. Moreover, I remained open to feedback and actively sought input from students, encouraging them to express their preferences and suggestions regarding instructional methods. This collaborative approach fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among the students, as they felt their voices were heard and their individual needs were considered. Continuous improvement and lifelong learning are essential for music educators to stay abreast of the evolving field of music education and adapt to the changing needs of their students (Johnson, 2018).

Inclusivity and diversity are essential components of music education, and research plays a vital role in understanding the challenges and opportunities for creating more inclusive and diverse music education programs. The field of world music pedagogy is constantly evolving, and the need for inclusivity in music education is increasingly pressing. As a performer and educator, I want to express my desire to further research the field of world music pedagogy and contribute to the decolonization of music education and the music scene. Lifelong learning, continuous improvement, and an open-minded approach are key skills for me to pursue in this journey. Gathering feedback and conducting interviews from participants of MENA Ensemble, provided valuable insights into these perspectives and how some students experience world music, and informed the need for development of my teaching skills.

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