Developing an All-School Model for Elementary Integrative Music Learning

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DEVELOPING AN ALL-SCHOOL MODEL FOR ELEMENTARY INTEGRATIVE MUSIC LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential for increasing informal music-making in elementary school culture, and create a model of such music-making. Precedence for this model can be found in the literature of ethnomusicology, educational psychology and learning theory, multicultural music education, and cultural anthropology. Literature from four distinct traditions and contexts of music-making in integrative sociocultural contexts—Sub-Saharan African ngoma, and Community Music as manifested in New Orleans second lines, old-time music and dance, and summer camp music-making—was parsed with a philosophical lens to determine and assess possible areas of intersection between these four participatory cultures and North American public school culture. Each of these five areas was examined through a comprehensive review of literature to define their salient characteristics. These characteristics were sorted to determine commonalities between areas, and the zones of intersection became the basis
for a speculative model of integrative music learning, featuring the inclusion of musical opportunities and interludes throughout the school day, thus taking school music beyond the confines of the music room. Instruction in music classes would still continue, enhanced in this model by supplemental learning opportunities inspired by the informal learning of traditional world musics, the participatory practice of New Orleans second line parades, old-time music and dance, and summer camp music culture. This model of integrative learning is also informed by current educational best practices such as child-centered learning, peer tutoring, experiential learning, and multicultural perspectives. It acknowledges the diversity of traditions consulted, while aiming for the unity in their seemingly disparate disciplines. Five universal characteristics were uncovered in the search for areas of intersection between North American elementary school culture, child culture, ngoma music-making, and Community Music-style music-making in New Orleans, old-time music and dance, and summer camp contexts: (a) Song; (b) play; (c) informal learning, as evidenced by oral tradition, peer tutoring, self-learning; (d) kinesthetic learning; and (e) contextualized learning, as evidenced in the sociocultural uses of music and situated learning. This model strives for the enactment of school music as a vital and integral part of daily school culture.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... iv

CHAPTER 1 ....................................................................................................................... 1
INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1
  Research Questions ......................................................................................................... 7
  Rationale ....................................................................................................................... 10
  Definition of Terms ....................................................................................................... 15

CHAPTER 2 ..................................................................................................................... 18
REVIEW OF LITERATURE ........................................................................................... 18
  Philosophical Research Lens: Exemplary Methodology .............................................. 19
  Music Education ........................................................................................................... 25
    Critical Pedagogy Applications to Music Education ................................................ 33
  Ethnomusicology and Anthropology ............................................................................ 35
  Education ...................................................................................................................... 42
  Community Music ........................................................................................................ 47
    New Orleans Second Line Music-making ............................................................... 49
  Old Time Music and Dance ...................................................................................... 52
    Summer Camp Music-making ................................................................................. 58

CHAPTER 3 ..................................................................................................................... 63
PROCEDURES ................................................................................................................. 63
  Restatement of Research Questions .............................................................................. 64
  Methodology ................................................................................................................. 65
  Limitations .................................................................................................................... 74

CHAPTER 4 ..................................................................................................................... 78
AFRICAN NGOMA: PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS ......................................... 78
  Functions or Uses of Music in African Culture ............................................................ 79
  The Phenomenon of Ngoma: Definitions ..................................................................... 84
  Critical Perspectives in Ngoma Research ................................................................. 88
  Song, Music-making, and Movement: An Inseparable Partnership ............................. 95
The Status of Elementary Music Instruction .............................................................. 201
Integrative Music Learning: Province of Specialist or Generalist? ....................... 206
Three Current Music Education Practices that Incorporate Ngoma Elements ........ 207
   Dalcroze .................................................................................................................. 208
   Orff ......................................................................................................................... 209
   Kodaly ..................................................................................................................... 211
Comparisons of Dalcroze, Orff, and Kodaly .......................................................... 211
Arts Integration and Infusion in the Elementary School ............................................ 213
   Curricular and Arts Integration Models ................................................................. 214
   Arts Infusion .......................................................................................................... 220
Musical Communities of Practice in the Elementary School .................................... 223
Theoretical Support for Implementing Ngoma in the Elementary School .......... 224
Types of Learning in Ngoma-Style Music-making .................................................... 229
   Perceptual Modalities ............................................................................................ 229
   Informal Learning .................................................................................................. 233
   Situated Cognition and Activity Theory ................................................................ 234
Potential Functions and Uses of Ngoma-Style Music-making in Elementary School 239
Summary of Ngoma Potentials in the North American Elementary School .......... 241
CHAPTER 9 ................................................................................................................... 243
JUSTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING THE MODEL ............................................... 243
   The Model: Integrative Music Learning ................................................................. 243
   Integrated Music Learning: Arguments and Counterarguments ......................... 247
Further Justifications for a Model of Integrative Participatory Music Learning .... 256
Obstacles to Implementation of the Integrative Music Learning Model ............... 258
Prerequisites to Implementation of Integrative Music Learning ............................ 261
Praxial Considerations: Repertoire Selection ........................................................... 263
   The Role of Popular Music and Hip Hop in Integrative Music Learning ........... 268
   Classical Music and Vernacularized Classical Music ........................................... 274
   Repertoire: Creating a School Song List ............................................................... 276
Application and Implementation of Participatory Music Learning .................... 278
Implementing Singing at Assemblies: A Story Song Approach............................. 280
Implementing Music-making at Assemblies and Beyond: A Collaborative Approach
..................................................................................................................................... 282
Implementing Singing Games........................................................................................... 287
Evaluation: School as an Activity System; School and Ngoma Theory....................... 290
Evaluation of the Implemented Model ........................................................................ 293
Conclusions ................................................................................................................ 297
APPENDIX A: Teaching Resource Suggestions and Examples: ............................... 300
APPENDIX B: Resource Suggestions for Schools with Varying Degrees of Music
Instruction ......................................................................................................................... 304
APPENDIX C: Examples of Song Types (Subject and/or Function)............................ 306
APPENDIX D: Outdoor Musical Playground Equipment Suggestions ..................... 309
APPENDIX E: Sample items on a Likert-style questionnaire for teachers and staff..... 311
APPENDIX F: Sample items on a Likert-style questionnaire for students ................. 312
APPENDIX G: Copyrighted Material and Permissions .................................................... 314
BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................... 320
VITA ................................................................................................................................... 346
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“...Music is significant for us as human beings principally because it embodies movement of a specifically human type that goes to the roots of our being and takes shape in the inner gestures that embody our deepest and most intimate responses.” (Sessions 1950, 19)

Music is a uniquely human form of expression, a vehicle for conveying emotions, culture (Walker 2007), and community (Ansdell 2010). As such, it seems reasonable to expect that music would have a key role in elementary school curriculum. These expectations appear to be fulfilled in a decadal, nationwide study sampling elementary arts instruction in the United States during 1999-2000, which found that 94 percent of public elementary schools offered music instruction (U.S. Department of Education 2002). However, in many North American elementary schools (73 percent of those surveyed), the majority of music-making takes place solely during an allotted time period once or twice a week, often in the music classroom, with sessions averaging 38 minutes (ibid.). Thus, the participatory music-making of the elementary school is frequently confined to the music classroom, or occurs in individual classrooms, but may not occur in additional contexts other than school music programs or assemblies. Often, this type of isolated school music instruction lacks practical application to daily life, both in terms of context and functional musical ability (Myers 2005), unlike the contextualized learning that occurs within the course of traditional daily life in cultures of orality (Blacking 1973; Finnegans 2007, 1988, 1970; Swanwick 1988). Additionally, the Western-style teaching
of concepts does not prepare students to make music on other occasions independent of
the music teacher (Choksy 1999; Regelski 1981, 1986, 2006; Myers, 2005). In the current
elementary school music-making environment, all students are regarded as potential
music participants; the purpose of elementary school general music, choral, and band
instruction can almost unequivocally be said to give students participatory music-making
opportunities. However, in light of the aforementioned separation between music and
other instruction, the music-making that occurs in the context of the elementary school is
not part of the quotidian social fabric in the culture of the school. The isolated, discrete
nature of such instruction may correlate to problems of musical skill such as beat
incompetence and lack of pitch discrimination that music teachers sometimes encounter
in both children and adults. Most importantly, such lack of skill may lead to
nonparticipation in musical activities, depriving individuals of the opportunities and
benefits of lifelong music-making.

Musical competence seems to reach a higher level among a larger segment of the
population in oral-tradition societies than in industrialized societies (Blacking 1985,
attribute a lower level of musicality among industrialized societies to the decline in live
music-making when it is supplanted by recorded and broadcast music (Gioia, 2006; Keil,
2006). A related factor is the distinction between the musically “talented” and the
“nontalented” in Western society, between the “stars” or performers, and the passive
listeners (Gioia 2006; Small 1996; Levitin 2006; Hanley 2005; McAllester 1983; Turino
2008). This distinction coincides with the rise of broadcast and recorded music, which
became the surrogate for live, informal music-making (Gioia 2006). An overall lower level of musical competence in industrialized societies has also been attributed to an emphasis on reading music notation over other skills such as playing by ear and improvisation (Bjorkvold 1992; Keil 2006).

Conversely, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists report that in societies where music-making is practiced informally and contextually by nearly everyone as a part of daily life, rather than as an activity reserved for the skilled few for special occasions, very high levels of musical competence can be observed among the general population (Bjorkvold 1992; Blacking 1985, 1973, 1967; McAllester 1985; Turino 2008). In light of these observations, faulty pitch discrimination, beat incompetence, and similar problems appear to be symptomatic of a predominantly passive North American “listening” culture lacking the opportunities or contexts for the kinds of participatory music-making that are commonplace in most non-industrialized societies (Bjorkvold 1992; Finnegan 1970; Green 2008, 1998; Lomax 1962; Small 1996). These same problems, which affect the instructional methods of music specialists and classroom teachers alike, are seemingly absent from oral-tradition cultures such as those of sub-Saharan Africa, where participatory, quotidian music-making is integrated into the social fabric, and musical competence is normative rather than exceptional (Blacking 1985, 1973, 1967; Finnegan 1970; Merriam 1959, 49-50; Nketia 1962). Connecting music with students’ daily lives is the purpose of the model of integrative music learning to be developed and proposed through this study.
Research Problem

Music making is essentially “sound that is driven by the human need for expression” (Campbell 2008, 41). As a uniquely human form of expression, it is essential to our physical and emotional wellbeing (Hallam 2007). Group music-making in particular reinforces a sense of community and personal wellbeing. “Group music making is also beneficial to the development of social skills and can contribute to health and well-being throughout the lifespan and can therefore contribute to community cohesion providing benefits to society as a whole” (Hallam 2007, 22). In many North American schools, music making takes place only in the music classroom or during an allotted time period in elementary schools. Related to this, there is a distinct segment of the able-bodied population of North America that is tone-deaf, beat-incompetent, or that cannot dance, and thus unable to participate in an essential form of expression. These problems of lack of musical skill help perpetuate the belief that music making is for the talented few, rather than for everyone. In contrast, many non-Western cultures have a singular lack of non-musicality—everyone is a musician, and anyone is able to use music as a vital form of self-expression. Therefore, the research problem is threefold: the majority of elementary music instruction and music-making takes place during the music class or during a specific time in the general classroom rather than within the context of the school culture and school day; beat incompetence and lack of pitch discrimination are problems that occur within a greater segment of the population in industrialized societies than in cultures of orality; music-making in North America is largely considered to be the province of a talented few.
Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential for increasing informal music-making in elementary school culture. The goal was the development of a model for restructuring education to enhance the integration of music into the school day. This research study was an effort to determine both a philosophical and praxial model for informal participatory school music-making based in part upon the practices of three disciplines: the traditional practices and pedagogies of sub-Saharan African musics, as suggested by writers such as Addo (1997), Mans (2007, 2003, 2002, 2000b), Nzewi (2003, 2009), and Aduonum (1980); the quotidian traditional uses of African music as described by Barz (2004), Blacking (1967), Finnegan (1988, 1970, 1965), Tang (2006), and Mosha (2000); and three areas of Community Music—the participatory practices of the New Orleans second line parades (Martinez 2004, 2009; Sakakeeny 2010; Wilkinson 1994; Regis 1999, 2001; Smith 1994); participatory multimodal music-making and movement in old-time music and dance (Spalding 1993, 1995; Turino 2008; Matthews 1983; Cantwell 1996; Rosenberg 1993; Bealle 2005, 1988; Spalding and Woodside 1995); and formal and informal music-making practices in summer camps, as revealed by historical and ethnographic research (Cohen 2006, Paris 2008, Posen 1974, Seeger and Seeger 2006, Tillery 1992, Cantwell 1996, Van Slyck 2006). The multimodal nature of the sub-Saharan ngoma experience, where music and dance are syncretic (Alves 2006; Blacking 1967; Mans 2003; Matiure 2005; Mosha 2000; Finnegan 1970, 1965), was compared with research literature on perceptual modalities (Korenman and Peynircioglu 2007; Gates 1993; Pautz 1988; and Sanders 1991), particularly tactile/kinesthetic learning.
styles as described by Hannaford (1995), and Linksman (1998). This study attempts to expand the awareness of the music-culture (Titon 1992) of the elementary school and its students, and ultimately increase its diversity of participatory opportunities in quotidian contexts, particularly in regard to singing.

Similar to the way Nettl describes the dichotomy of the ethnomusicologist as balancing between the diversity of world musics and “the basic unity of mankind as exhibited in music and musical behavior” (Nettl 1980, 2), this model of integrative music learning acknowledges the diversity of traditions consulted, while aiming for the unity in their seemingly disparate disciplines. Thus, Nettl’s “universals” was investigated to discover areas of intersection between North American elementary school culture, child culture, ngoma music-making, and Community Music-style music-making in New Orleans and summer camp contexts. The universals between these various cultures are five: (1) Song; (2) play; (3) informal learning, as evidenced by oral tradition, peer tutoring, self-learning; (4) kinesthetic learning; and (5) contextualized learning, as evidenced in the sociocultural uses of music and situated learning.

Literature from four distinct traditions and contexts of music-making in integrative sociocultural contexts—sub-Saharan African ngoma and Community Music as manifested in New Orleans second lines, old-time music and dance, and summer camp music-making—was parsed with a philosophical lens to determine if there are areas of intersection between these four participatory cultures and North American public school culture. From these areas of intersection, a model was developed for integrating participatory music-making within the school day in addition to curricular music
instruction. A list of examples of musics and music-making contexts was developed for potential use by school students and staff of all levels of musical literacy. Evaluative tools include items for two Likert-style questionnaires, one for students and the other for staff, to assess attitudes and music-making practices before and after implementing participatory music learning.

**Research Questions**

Two broad research questions initiated the philosophical process in this study: First, based upon existing research literature in the areas of sub-Saharan African ethnomusicology, public school culture, and the Community Music sub-areas of New Orleans second line music-making, old-time music and dance, and North American summer camp culture, which practices and philosophies support the development of a model for school-wide informal, participatory music instruction? Second, how can such an integrative model for music learning be designed? The intent of this study is to explore the potential for such a model, and to draft a model that can be implemented and evaluated.

For this study, an integrative musical learning model was proposed to be constructed, based upon prior research, for the teaching of music by using the elementary school’s culture to define occasions for performing song, movement and instrumental music within the daily routine. This model synthesizes concepts and practices documented and described in narrowly focused research in the broad fields of world musics, Community Music, and education, which support the hypothesis. Ethnomusicology provides examples of informal traditional music performances that can
be examined for indications of where informal group music-making can occur in daily school culture.

The two initial research questions above generated ten additional questions that guided and focused the research. In each strand of inquiry, the questions begin with the actual music-making and radiate outward to the societies to which the practices pertain.

1. Which characteristics of the musics of oral-tradition cultures allow or encourage informal, participatory music-making?

2. Which characteristics of oral-tradition cultures/societies allow or encourage informal, participatory music-making?

3. What elements of North American elementary school culture would allow or encourage informal, participatory music-making?

In searching for existing models of participatory, integrative music learning, it soon became evident that sub-Saharan African music-making as described in ethnomusicological research was a rich source of extant participatory music-making. The multimodal, communal, contextualized nature of such music-dance, termed ngoma, to be described in fuller detail in Chapters 4 and 5, could be found, in some degree, in North America. North American participatory music-making that embraced similarly inclusive ideals of community and participation was found in New Orleans second lines, old-time music and dance, and summer camp music-making. These lines of inquiry led to the following questions intended to explore music-making as a sociological phenomenon:

4. What are the sociocultural characteristics of sub-Saharan African ngoma?

5. What are the sociocultural characteristics of New Orleans second line parades and
music-making in that context?

6. What are the sociocultural characteristics of old time music and dance and music-making in that context?

7. What are the sociocultural characteristics of summer camp culture and music-making in that context?

8. What are the sociocultural characteristics of North American elementary school culture?

9. Where do these five areas intersect, and how can these areas of intersection become the basis for a model for integrative music learning?

Sociocultural characteristics of sub-Saharan African ngoma, second line music-making, old-time music and dance, summer camp music-making, and school culture were described, categorized, and compared. It seemed reasonable to expect that an exploration of North American elementary school culture would reveal components of child culture in addition to administrative structures. These elements of child culture were expected to include play, informal learning, and peer teaching, all of which are aspects of music learning in traditional sub-Saharan African societies, among others. The search for sociocultural characteristics yielded the following five universals, as previously stated: song, play, informal learning, kinesthetic learning, and contextual learning. These universals became the basis for the practices outlined in the model of Integrative Music Learning. Question 9 additionally formed the basis for the remaining two research questions:

10. How would an integrative music learning model function in North American
10

11. How can an integrative music learning model be articulated, enacted, and evaluated?

These last questions necessitated an examination of school culture from the perspective of change. Extant research from Sing Up, a nationwide program in the UK, provided insight into actions that have been taken to enhance schools’ music-making cultures. In summary, the present study was intended to explore the sub-Saharan African concept of ngoma, and three examples of Community Music as manifested in North American summer camp culture, which integrates music performance into the daily routine, old-time music and dance, where contextualized, informal learning and live music-making and movement are inseparable, and multi-age participation is encouraged, and New Orleans second line parades and jazz funerals, which are contextualized, multimodal, participatory musical events. Like ngoma, summer camp culture, old-time music and dance, and New Orleans second line parades, this model includes music-making by doing, and music-making in a social context within the fabric of daily life.

**Rationale**

Music was an integral part of daily life in ancient civilization (Dewey 1934). This notion of art (and by extension, music) as inseparable from our existence is the basis for the concept of integrative musical learning. In many ways it is a return to the past. Models for integrative music learning exist within the cultures of New Orleans participatory music-making practices (Sakakeeny 2010; Martinez 2004, 2009; Wilkinson 1994; Regis 1999, 2001; Smith 1994), the participatory multimodal music-making and
movement in old-time music and dance (Spalding 1993, 1995; Turino 2008; Matthews 1983; Cantwell 1996; Rosenberg 1993; Bealle 2005, 1988; Spalding and Woodside 1995), North American summer camps (Seeger and Seeger 2006; Cohen 2006; Posen 1974, Cantwell 1996, Shivers 1971), and African musics (Nketia 1974; Kwami 1992; Barz 2004; Mans 2003). Community Music can inform music-making in the elementary school through its participatory practices, multi-age and multi-ability groupings, and informal learning that take place in many communities of practice (Higgins 2006; Keil, Keil, and Blau 1992). The ngoma-like idea that everyone can learn music—or learn to music—is found in Western pedagogies from Lowell Mason (Kelly 2009, 53) to Kodaly (Choksy 1999), Orff (Orff 1978; Orff and Keetman 1958), and Dalcroze (1913, 1921). This refutation of the notion that music-making is for the talented few is both a return to praxial attitudes of the past (Gruhn 2007, Gioia 2006), and a novel concept to the majority of North Americans (Andrews 2008, Joyce 2005, Hanley 2005, Turino 2008).

Many researchers cite the need for philosophical inquiry into music education practices (Alperson 1991; Jorgenson 2006; Reimer 1997, 2006). Others call for a praxial approach that can be implemented contextually (Elliott 1995, Bowman 2004, Regelski 2006, 1981). The present study was intended to incorporate both approaches; it is a philosophical inquiry into the musical and social culture of the North American elementary school, and the practice of multimodal participatory music-making as exemplified in sub-Saharan African ngoma. Using a philosophical lens, the study was intended to explore the research literature of these cultures of music-making to find
elements that could form a framework for a praxial school music culture that is fully participatory and integrated with school culture.

This type of framework has distinct advantages over an approach that limits instruction to the music class period. By identifying those elements of school culture that are fixtures in daily life, and matching them with correlative musical activities and events, music instruction becomes more holistic, is able to make intercurricular connections, and is not restricted to the music class. Merriam (1964) distinguished between the uses of music and the functions of music, both concerned with the human/social context of music-making. Modeling a school culture of informal music making on the uses and functions of music-making in cultures of orality (Finnegan 1970, 1988; 2007; Blacking 1967, 1973), second line music-making (Martinez 2004, 2009; Sakakeeny 2008, 2010; Berry 1988; Wilkinson 1994; Regis 1999, 2001), old-time music and dance (Spalding 1993, 1995; Turino 2008; Matthews 1983; Cantwell 1996; Rosenberg 1993; Bealle 2005, 1988; Spalding and Woodside 1995), and summer camp music-making (Seeger and Seeger 2006, Tillery 1992; Posen 1974; Cohen 2006; Cantwell 1996) will enrich and enhance, but not replace, the school’s formal music instruction. Modeling classroom use of world musics on the uses of other cultures’ traditional music in daily life, as described by writers such as Barz (2004), Tang (2006), Kwami (1992), Nketa (1971), and Kuture (2005), will help to make the sociocultural concept of such music, as well as the music itself, understood. This type of informal learning, combined with a participatory culture, would enhance formal music instruction by a music specialist.
This model derives from the praxial and contextualist philosophical positions as described by Reimer (1997). In the praxial position (Reimer 1997, Elliott 1995), music is processual, concerned with the doing and creating, the performance. The contextualist stance regards music-making as a sociocultural behavior, in which music-making occurs in the context of function. The sociocultural functions of music play a dominant role in enabling us to saturate the school day with music. Like the praxialist’s regard of music/art as functional rather than as the absolutist’s art object, we can regard music as something with a purpose fixed to the context in which the music is utilized. The structure of the school day, including daily rituals such as eating lunch in the cafetorium, recess, classroom transition times, and special occasions such as assemblies, will suggest potential arenas for participatory music-making. The themes of informal learning, kinesthetic learning, and situated cognition appeared repeatedly in comparisons across the disciplines of ethnomusicology, education, anthropology and sociology as concepts of ngoma, Community Music, and school culture were examined.

The concept of this integrative musical learning model originated during a graduate course on teaching the music of Africa. In an online discussion post regarding the teaching of ngoma—the holistic integration of dance, song, instrumental music, storytelling in sub-Saharan African music—Boston University graduate student Jason Rummel suggested that for students to experience ngoma, they needed music in the form of singing, singing games, instrumental music, instrument-making, and dance, incorporated into all aspects of the school day. While the idea was fascinating—and immediately suggested the questions, why does this not already occur and how could it
be implemented—it could easily encounter resistance, since this type of environment would require the cooperation of the entire school staff, from non-instructional and teaching staff to administration. The idea resurfaced in a later course on aesthetics and criticism in music, where the differences between the absolutists and the contextualists were discussed in relation to music curriculum. The discussions regarding the two opposing viewpoints served to highlight the lack of spontaneous live performance and music-making in North American school culture at all levels, and suggested to the author that the cultures of world musics, community musics, and summer camps entailed musical practices that could be integrated into the K-6 school setting.

While the practices of sub-Saharan African ngoma were chosen for specific investigation and emulation, the model is not intended to be restricted to African music. It seemed more logical to posit a school culture in which such a model could occur and to expand the model by incorporating those types of activities into the school, using all types of music, not simply music from one continent. If such a model was already in place, there would be an established precedent for integrating music into the culture of the entire school experience, and multicultural musics could be introduced into this structure in a holistic way that honors their social contexts more closely than merely confining them to the music classroom. Two models for this type of integrative musical learning activity have existed in North America since the 18th century (Regis 1999, 493) and the 1880s (Paris 2008, Kahn 2003, Van Slyck 2006) in the form of New Orleans second line parades and summer camp culture, respectively. A third model, old-time music and dance, has roots in both the 18th century and in the 20th century folk revival.
Thus, from Rummel’s idea it was a short step to the concept of using models of traditional ethnic music-making, vernacular music such as that of summer camp culture, and contextualized music-making such as second line parades and old-time music and dance as a basis for an integrative musical learning model in the school setting. There is a great, untapped potential for increased live music making, formal and informal, in the K-6 school culture, including singing, singing games, and instrumental music.

**Definition of Terms**

*Ngoma* literally means “drum” in Venda (South Africa) and is used in African ethnomusicological and educational writings to signify the syncretic nature of sub-Saharan African music, dance, drumming, and song. Because of the use of such multimedia music-making, Mans expanded her definition of ngoma to include the dimension of spirituality. For the purposes of the present study, ngoma will refer to the application and implementation of this holistic musical approach in informal music learning. Subsequent chapters will further refine upon this definition.

*Musicking* (Small 1998) refers to the act of making music, whether in formal or informal settings. Although both Elliott (1991) and Swanwick (1999) have softened their praxial education approach to include listening also, this study will not be concerned with passive listening.

*Elementary school* will signify those students in grades kindergarten through five or six, depending upon the school.

*School culture* will be defined as those aspects of daily school life, administrative, social, educational, which directly impact students. These include, but are not limited to: