Music Education for Blacks (Africans) in Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa

Authors : Bernett Nkwayi Mulungo

Abstract : There are vast community music projects in South African townships, and their courses range from music theory aural practical individual and ensemble lessons on orchestral instruments and recorders – these instruments being primarily "Western". Despite this relative success – indeed one of the few in the realm of arts in post-apartheid South Africa – what remains troubling is the dominance of western thought (as music theory) and modes of teaching music that maintain the idea of music study as alien in black communities. This identified problem speaks to a significant theme, namely: Arts education for community development, which is my area of interest. Primarily for, it is a timely platform to firmly entrench appreciation, understanding, and, most undoubtedly, the value(s) of the arts to the youth. Drawing on one's experience as a lecturer in (and graduate from) a South African tertiary institution and as a teacher in a community project, this research will interrogate the content of some of the program(s): from the theoretical material taught in music theory classes to the practical repertoire taught and/or performed. The focal point of this research is on how this content informs or speaks to its intended "beneficiaries" – the African youth. Through these and other considerations, the paper aims to sketch the potentially radical consequences that transformed music education at community and earlier levels will have for higher education music studies in South Africa.