

## **Contextualizing Traditional Music Studies in an Institution of Higher Learning: A Case Study of the BA Irish Music and Dance at the University of Limerick**

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### **Abstract**

*The indigenous knowledge system that informs the content of African performance practices derive from the distinctive history, philosophy, creative theory, geographical location, cross-cultural influences and such of particular African communities. The transfer of these indigenous knowledge systems to students in a classroom situation has been a challenge in African school curriculum. There are music cultures that have been able to appropriate their indigenous music cultures for classroom education at third level of education. This paper therefore is an investigation into one of such institutions that has incorporated their traditional music into the music curriculum and the contextual implications of achieving this feat.*

**Key Words:** Indigenous, Performance, Education, Contextual Implications

### **Introduction**

The performance practices found in indigenous African cultures have a well articulated theoretical content and an equally well structured creative process. These two attributes together with the performance practice itself provides material and content enough for the study of indigenous African music as a possible degree program of study in a third level institution of learning in Africa. There are already existing modules in African music found in most third level music curriculum in Africa, but hardly a full course of study that focuses on indigenous African music both in content and teaching methodology. The Irish World Academy of music and dance at the University of Limerick Ireland, offers a full traditional music degree program at third and fourth levels of education. Sheehan-Campbell's 'world music pedagogy', which she describes as —...concerning itself with how music is taught/transmitted and received/learned within cultures, and how best the processes that are included in significant ways within these cultures can be preserved or at least partially retained in classrooms and rehearsal halls! (2004, p. 26), best describes the intended approach and outcomes of a possible university degree in indigenous African music.

Considering the dynamics and challenges of mainstreaming indigenous African musical arts practices in classrooms all over Africa, this study sought to investigate educational models where indigenous/traditional/folk music theory and practice has successfully been integrated into the educational institution's curriculum. The Irish world academy for music and dance has achieved this feat in the third and fourth levels of education, hence my choice of their curriculum in BA Irish traditional music and dance as my case study. My focus therefore will be on the contextual implications of having such traditional music studies in a modern academic environment in Ireland.

Working as the Educational and Research Manager for the Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Music and Dance Practices for Africa or CIIMDA ([www.ciimda.org](http://www.ciimda.org)), I have been engaged in the research initiative on implementing indigenous music theory and practice in contemporary literacy-oral driven musical arts education in the African context. We, in 2009 introduced a Certificate in African Indigenous Cultural arts Education (CAICAE) which is accredited by the University of Pretoria in South Africa (Mogomme, Nzewi & Nzewi, 2009). The certificate program was a move to consolidate and formalize the teaching of African musical arts as a specialized (cognition-based) education subject area in the African school system. The certificate program trains teachers on the creative philosophy and theory of African indigenous cultural arts practices for classroom education. The Certificate has a strong curriculum adaptation and implementation module to help teachers develop lesson plans and learning programs and adopt the curriculum to suit their direct teaching environment. CIIMDA went on to further develop an African based curriculum in South Africa for grades 10 to 12 , deriving its content from the philosophy and theory as is found in the creative ideologies and principle of most indigenous musical arts practices in Africa (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement [CAPS] of South Africa, 2009). The classroom education plan presented in the curriculum, emphasizes the African indigenous philosophical, theoretical and performance logic distinguished by the implicit humanity and societal purposes indigenous music was conceived to accomplish.

Western art music has for a very long time, been the focus of music education in many parts of the world in content, models, theories as well as practice. This is not withstanding the fact that every culture group, whether in Africa, Europe, the Americas and other parts of the world, have their own well developed traditional/indigenous/folk music practice and education systems. The models set up in most academic institution around the world today, derive from the well established western art music programs, with a lot of focus on Classical music and more recently Jazz music as the desired choice in performance practice. This hegemony of western art music over traditional/indigenous/folk music of the world has been around for as long as the great European nations started their colonization of other regions. Keene (2010), talks about the folk culture in America as having —always been a source of embarrassment to those who look towards Europe as their artistic Meccal (Keene, 2010, p.x). Much of the same can be said of the place of indigenous music in many cultures in Africa since the advent of early explorers sojourn into Africa, where indigenous cultural practices are looked down on as either primitive or inferior compared to the imported western practices. Speaking on the current status of Irish traditional music at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, Sandra Joyce mentions that —...because a lot of the aspects of the Irish culture suffered from this kind of sense of inferiority...Irish dancing to a large extent, singing, and the language in particular was associated with ignorance and poverty (S. Joyce, Personal Communication, November 21, 2013). The impact of Colonialism therefore has been responsible for the extinction of some cultural practices in different parts of the world. In order to change this standpoint, Kanu (2007) highlights the need for reforms in educational systems in Africa:

As education is generally regarded as the key to national development, proposals for nation building have included the reform of inherited educational systems which were erected to maintain the colonial social order and which continue to function to foster neo-colonial dependency, promote elitism, and

inadequately prepare individuals for living successfully in their communities and in a rapidly changing world. Paramount among these reform proposals has been the call to re-appropriate African indigenous educational traditions that were marginalized or dismantled during colonial rule in Africa (p. 3).

Kanu goes further to ask a pertinent question:

But precisely how can African traditions be **re-appropriated** for education that is grounded in the continent's past while at the same time meeting the demands of living successfully in postcolonial and global contexts today? (p.3)

—Re-appropriation according to Wikipedia free encyclopedia is —the cultural process by which a group reclaims—re-appropriates—terms or artifacts that were previously used in a way disparaging of that group. The focus of my PhD research therefore could then be said to be on —re-appropriating indigenous African performance epistemology for classroom music education, and this includes adopting indigenous teaching and learning methodologies appropriate for the cultural environment in most of the schools in Africa, in order to overturn the seemingly deliberate attempt to suppress indigenous music cultural practices, while promoting the exogenous music culture of western art music. This nonetheless has changed over the years, and the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, is an exemplary institution of higher learning, where traditional music and dance is the core focus of the teaching and learning of music at the third and fourth levels of education. This paper therefore seeks to investigate this existing degree program, with a view to understand how issues around contextualizing traditional music practice in third level education have been addressed. This will in turn provide a working model for my PhD work.

The Irish World Academy for Music and Dance was established in January 1994 at the University of Limerick, by Professor Micheal O Suilleabhain, who was the first holder of a new Chair of Music (<http://www.irishworldacademy.ie/>). From inception, the academy was initially concerned with research and innovation in Irish and Irish related music world wide and this interest has now expanded to form a central ring of nine MA programs with associated doctorate research. Although the academy started with the award of MA degree, it has now expanded to encompass a BA Voice and Dance Program and a BA Irish Traditional Music and Dance, which is the focus of this study. The BA Irish music and dance is a four year degree program, with key focus in traditional Irish music and dance performance (<http://www.irishworldacademy.ie/>).

### **Tradition**

Wikipedia free online encyclopedia describes —tradition as a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past. It goes further to discuss the origin of the word; —The English word "tradition" comes from the Latin word *traditio*, the noun from the verb *traderere* or *tradere* (to transmit, to hand over, to give for safekeeping); it was originally used in Roman law to refer to the concept of legal transfers and inheritance. Dictionary.com gives a broader definition, encompassing the intention of \_word in this paper, about tradition; the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc. from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or by practice.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/tradition>).

The term —traditional music in this instance therefore refers to music that has been handed down from generation to generation in Ireland. Although from interviews conducted by the researcher, it would seem that what is known of traditional Irish music dates back to just over a hundred years.

The most significant thing about tradition is its constantly evolving nature, and this comes about through acculturation and other external social, political and religious influences. Gross (1992) describes the evolving nature of tradition thus:

As social and cultural changes occur, so do ways of confronting and organizing experience. And as experiences change, so do modes of perception, including perceptions of what a tradition is and means. When needs and perceptions shift, no matter how slightly, the inherited traditions cannot help but be apprehended and assimilated differently. Hence, no tradition is ever taken over precisely as it was given, or passed on precisely as it was received. Rather it is always adapted to a situation (p. 14).

The perception of what is —traditionall can then be described as tacit knowledge handed down orally or through practice from generation to generation, which is subject to change and modification as it is influenced by acculturation as well as social, political and religious factors in an ever changing cultural milieu.

### **International Conventional Methods for Music education**

There are a number of internationally recognized conventional methods for teaching and learning music, some of which have been well developed and are in use in many institutions around the world, and they include:

*The Dalcroze method* was developed in the early 20th century by Swiss musician and educator Émile Jaques-Dalcroze. The method is divided into three fundamental concepts - the use of solfège, improvisation, and eurhythmics. Sometimes referred to as "rhythmic gymnastics", eurhythmics teaches concepts of rhythm, structure, and musical expression using movement

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_education#Dalcroze\\_method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_education#Dalcroze_method)).

*Carl Orff* was a prominent German composer. The Orff Schulwerk is considered an "approach" to music education. It begins with a student's innate abilities to engage in rudimentary forms of music, using basic rhythms and melodies. Orff considers the whole body a percussive instrument and students are led to develop their music abilities in a way that parallels the development of western music. The approach encourages improvisation and discourages adult pressures and mechanical drill, fostering student self-discovery

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_education#Orff\\_Schulwerk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_education#Orff_Schulwerk)).

*The Suzuki method* was developed by Shinichi Suzuki in Japan shortly after World War II, and it uses music education to enrich the lives and moral character of its students. The movement rests on the double premise that "all children can be well educated" in music,

and that learning to play music at a high level also involves learning certain character traits or virtues which make a person's soul more beautiful. The primary method for achieving this is centered on creating the same environment for learning music that a person has for learning their native language. This 'ideal' environment includes love, high-quality examples, praise, rote training and repetition, and a time-table set by the student's developmental readiness for learning a particular technique ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_education#Suzuki\\_method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_education#Suzuki_method)).

### **World Music Pedagogy**

The growth of cultural diversity within school-age populations prompted music educators from the 1960s onward to diversify the content of the music curriculum, and to work with ethnomusicologists and some of the world's artist-musicians in establishing instructional practices relevant to the musical traditions. 'World music pedagogy' was coined by Patricia Shehan-Campbell (2004) to describe world music content and practice in elementary and secondary school music programs. The pedagogy advocates the use of human resources, i.e., "culture-bearers", as well as deep and continued listening to archived resources, in order to encourage informed music-making experiences. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_education#World\\_Music\\_Pedagogy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_education#World_Music_Pedagogy)).

The methods as discussed above have some very close affinity to methods of knowledge transmission in indigenous cultures in Africa. There are elements found in each of the above methods that ultimately culminate in a method that could be termed —an African indigenous approach and these include but are not limited to the use of human resources (culture bearers) as found in the World Music Pedagogy. This was noted by Blacking (1965) about the matsige of the Venda in South Africa. According to him, —the matsige are recognized and his presence in a district inspires young admirers to practice to attain his level of expertise. The ideal environment discussed in the Suzuki method, which includes love, high-quality examples, praise, rote training and repetition would be found in most music learning and apprenticeship situations in many cultures in sub-Saharan Africa; encouraging improvisation and discouraging adult pressures and mechanical drill, fostering student self-discovery as is found in Carl Orff's method. Children in most African cultures are encouraged to form their own versions of adult music groups from a very young age (Mogomme *et al.*, 2009, p. 58) and would in most cases belong to children music groups without adult supervision. As Nzewi documents, —Egbe, (a mother musician)<sup>6</sup> also learned to play music in the children's xylophone teams, which according to him, had disappeared due to the influence of schools... (Nzewi *et al.*, 2007, p.59) Finally, the use of eurhythmics in the Dalcroze method has been an ongoing practice to embody rhythm and melody in some indigenous music cultures in Africa (Nzewi, 2013, p. 202).

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<sup>6</sup> A mother musician is an expert on any indigenous African music instrument, which is used to direct the proceedings in any musical event or of an event music. This term was erroneously referred to as —master musician by earlier researchers. Music is conceived as a woman in Africa.

## **The BA Traditional Irish Music and Dance Curriculum**

### ***BA Irish Music and Dance Central Ethos***

The BA Irish Music and Dance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance focuses on the development of the student as a creative and skilled practitioner in performance, academic and vocational fields. We see the student as the potential site and originator for creative practice and the focus of the program is the realization and development of this potential (BA Irish music and dance syllables, autumn 2012).

The BA traditional Irish music and dance curriculum stipulates that each student takes five modules every semester. Four of those modules are courses offered directly by the Irish world academy of music and dance, while the fifth is in the first three semesters taken in Irish Language and subsequently for the rest of the duration of the program, taken as an elective of the students' choice outside the academy. Of the four remaining modules, one full module is called contextualizing and vocational studies, this is where popular music and dance studies, classical music and dance studies, ethno-musicology, ethno-choreology, are all covered, not in great detail, but enough to give the student a feel for the wider disciplines that are there.

Then there are two similar modules, the Practicum modules of primary performance interest, where each student has to take a module that is divided into two parts, one to develop the student's main performance practice and the second is related to performance skills. The musicians will in the second part take courses on keyboard skills and Ear/Notation/Theory (ENT), while the dancers will engage with practices related to increasing mobility and flexibility as well as overall performance skills. This will continue for three years until the fourth year, when this part is dropped. The next module is similar to the first, only that in this case, it is a Practicum of secondary performance interest and practical ensemble. Then the other contextualizing study would be the Irish music and dance studies which run through the entire four years. This important module is progressive from year one right through to year four. The module gives the student in the first year, an introduction to traditional music and dance studies and progresses over the next four years, touching on different elements and aspects of traditional Irish music and dance. From the above, it is obvious that performance takes up a huge chunk of the syllables, and the students gets a one hour one-on-one session with their instrument tutors a week as well as three two hour master classes per semester.

The academy also has an artist-in-residence program, thus giving the students more time with professional musicians who might mentor them in different performance areas. Lunch time concerts take place in the academy twice every week and the academy invites different musicians playing different genres of Irish music. The students are expected to attend a minimum of six lunch time concerts as part of their assessment. The use of journal writing as a tool for both the tutors and students to track and monitor the progress of the students weekly is essential to the program. It accords the student the opportunity to reflect on each class taken and also to identify areas where more work might be needed or extra effort put in.

Assessment for the practicum happens at the end of every semester, the autumn performance is closed while the spring performance is open to the public. The students get to prepare a 15 minutes classroom performance exam, but in the final year, they have to present a 30 minutes Final Year Performance (FYP), which would reflect both solo and ensemble work. This FYP is held at the end of the second semester. This is a brief overview of the BA Irish traditional music and dance course.

With this established, an important question in this paper will be —how do we design a curriculum that will capture the full essence of the indigenous African musical arts epistemology, retaining the intangible elements of value system, validity, humanistic attributes and socio-cultural implications embedded in indigenous African music culture? Furthermore, —how do we contextualize the practice, knowing well that the modern classroom site is quite different from the indigenous community sites where the theatre of musical performances is enacted? Deriving from this also will be issues around assessment, progression, and the introduction of notation. To answer these questions, interviews were conducted with lecturers who helped develop this curriculum and a cross-section of other people conducting research in traditional Irish music under different circumstances (PhD students with related works) at the Irish world academy.

### **Contextual Implications**

I interviewed four respondents during the course of this paper. The four people interviewed were Jack Talty (JT), Niall Keegan (NK), Sandra Joyce (SJ) who was the Director of the Academy and Jean Downey (JD). The key question on the importance of teaching music practice within an understanding of the original context in which that practice is performed, drew a response in which all respondents felt that it was imperative that traditional music is taught with an understanding of its contextual implications. JT in answering this question used his current research and its focus on Irish Traditional music from 1963 to date. According to him, he believes that it is impossible to teach traditional music without the link to what he calls the "grassroots context". Talking about his own practice he goes on to say

I work in what many would know as a traditional context where a lot of the music that I play is, to borrow a jazz term, —straight ahead! as in traditional (traditional) music. —I couldn't imagine any kind of engagement with the traditional music education without referencing what (J.T, Personal Communication, November 14, 2013).

SJ was also of the same opinion using the trend at the Irish world academy and also her experience as a student at University College Cork under Prof Michael O Suilleabhain as an example.

With traditional music, you were learning about the music, you were learning about the dancing side of things, we got the opportunity to do dance, we got the opportunity to do song; we got the opportunity to play traditional instruments...you could choose to do those things (dance, songs, traditional instruments etc) and it really contextualized what we were learning, it just makes it real, it is not something you are passively observing. You are actually embodying and that is really important, and that is I suppose at the heart of

what we do here at the academy (SJ, Personal Communication, November 18, 2013).

To a large extent, her description of learning traditional is exactly the case in the African context and an argument we at CIIMDA have made for the teaching and learning of African musical arts practices as a holistic subject area encompassing studies in music, dance, theatre, singing, theatre and the plastic arts, as is observed in indigenous cultures in Africa.

In most African cultures there is no specific terminology for music as embodied sonic phenomena. Rather, a unifying term qualified and discussed a composite creative ramification, the components of which could be distinctively perceived as sonic, choreographic, dramatic, poetic or material (Nzewi, 2007, p. 308).

JD, whose key area is community music and music education equally felt it was very important, especially since most of the students who would teach music will be expected to play the music. According to her:

I think it is important within their own genre, because if they go on to teach Irish music, they are going to be able to teach through performing...it's a much richer for a student if they are taught by a teacher who can actually perform. And of course performing will be expected to happen within the context the music is performed in the communities (JD, Personal Communication, November 28, 2013).

The next question sought to identify the type of contextual studies the informants thought were important for the students. SJ who was a part of the curriculum development for the course shed some light on the contextual studies undertaken by the students. These studies include the reading and writing of the Irish language, which she says the students need to learn in order to be able to access traditional Irish songs. "The students have to study it for three semesters, after that if they have a high enough standard, they can keep it going to their bachelor's degree, otherwise they can choose from other modules" (SJ, Personal Communication, November 18, 2013).

The BA Irish music and dance curriculum also had a module on Irish traditional music and dance studies, and this module dealt with most of the contextual areas that the students need. JT on his part as an outsider (in that his PhD is his first real contact with the Academy) thought that historical studies were an important part of the context of the music which should be studied. He explains:

I have encountered different opinions and perceptions on what people believe are important to study. From my research, the first thing that people speak of is the idea of *historical context* that comes from people who are positioned on all parts of the spectrum, the traditional and innovation spectrum, whether they are very conservative or those more towards the innovative side of the spectrum, what has come up in my research is that people think that you need to have a good understanding and grounding in your tradition to be able to successfully and effectively innovate, so my consultants have told me that they feel that that grounding, that background in the history of Irish traditional music, how it has developed, how it has evolved over the last three centuries is



something that has been important to the consultants who are practitioners, and students who have attended courses like these... (JT, Personal Communication, November 14, 2013).

The next question which borders on mentorship and the use of indigenous practitioners as resource persons, I sought to know what they thought about bringing in traditional musicians to interact with, teach and play with the students in an educational institution. SJ went on to explain how imperative it was that they do that. She says, —It's vital, we couldn't run our courses if we didn't do that, we bring in like maybe 80 people over the year, they are the people who mainly play the lunchtime concerts, we don't just bring the older people, we sometimes do bring some younger musicians who are out there as well doing their thing... , it's very important to us cause it's about kind of being aware of the reality of performance practice in the real world, whose out there, what are they doing? (SJ, Personal Communication, November 18, 2013). JT also talked of the opportunities that are out there for traditional musicians in institutions. According to him, —the general idea of employing tutors and that selection process is widely discussed... The tutors are well known to be very good musicians. That kind of team of teachers is very attractive... I have been told by consultants that there is a huge opportunity to work with these people (traditional musicians). Their context for music making is very active (JT, Personal Communication, November 14, 2013).

My next question was one that was of special interest to my study, because having been part of the development of a notational system for scoring for single membrane drum and other indigenous African instruments (Nzewi & Nzewi, 2007; 2009; 2012), I have always taken interest in how different people address the use of notation for compositions on indigenous African instruments. This question sought to find out how the notation fits into the curriculum at the academy, and how receptive the students are to it. SJ gave instances of a historic use of notation in Irish traditional music and also spoke on the perspective of the academy, while JT approached it from a more professional performer's perspective as well as giving some historic instance. According to SJ, some form of notation has always been employed by traditional music teachers, whether it is very basic music notation, alphabetic or graphic notation:

Classical western art notation has been used for quite a long time. The most popular book and it's so popular that it was called —the book was a collection put together in Chicago by Francis O'Neal, a police officer, he didn't actually read music himself but he was a traditional musician originally from Cork, and he employed another O'Neal, to write down the music for him, and his book is still used by traditional musicians today. And also it opens up a repertoire and access to sources of music and all the rest of it, and allows you to analyze music in a particular way that is very hard to if you don't read music (SJ, Personal Communication, November 18, 2013).

She went on about the place of notation in the BA Traditional Irish music and dance curriculum and how the students have valued it, even though a lot of them don't like it:

They have to pass it, it's only 20% of one module but if they fail that section of the module, they have to repeat the whole module". Increasingly the academy have realized what an important skill it is, they currently have a class

called "song for all", where they bring all the students together and teach them song repertoire, a kind of sight singing class to try and re-enforce the teaching of notation. She notes that even though it's on a classical music module, it feeds into the reality of what is needed as a traditional musician in the modern world (SJ, Personal Communication, November 18, 2013).

JT agreed that it was important to understand the use of notation and gave a recent instance where it assisted him. He mentioned a music project he was involved in called the —Claire Memory orchestral, which basically was a combination of classical and traditional musicians brought together to perform a premier of a concerto called the Claire concerto and his ability to read notation played a huge role for him. He summarized on the importance of notation thus:

The importance of notation in the modern world we live in today cannot be lost in the need to preserve our cultures, especially for the academic musician, navigating the musical terrain in a global world would require a good measure of an understanding of the notation field, it might not be totally necessary in performance, but it is a skill that gives an added advantage to anybody who possesses it (JT, Personal Communication November 14, 2013).

The last question which is also pertinent in my research is one that seems to come up quite often in conferences I have attended and general discussions on the advancement of traditional music. I wanted the views of my respondents on this question: In terms of advancement and the development of a creative continuum, at what point does traditional music cease to be called traditional music, and who reserves the right to determine the authenticity of any evolved traditional music? I have once been accused in a conference (International Society of Music Education conference China 2010), of putting indigenous African music in a box; in my attempt to establish some sort of a creative continuum for certain instances of African creative musical arts practices. A group of scholars at the conference were of the opinion that for African musical practice to be African, it should be left in its virgin form, and any attempt to practice it outside its originally intended milieu is not good for the culture. In this case, I am using the Irish traditional music scene to address this question. JT believed that the outcome of the 1955 conference on Irish music held in Sao Paulo, set up what has become —the Irish council for traditional music, a body that today would authenticate a piece of music as traditionally Irish. According to him,

along the lines of what was decided by what has become the Irish council for traditional music, that conference in 1955 in Sao Paulo, hints at how tradition is decided; there is an idea of community consensus, like a community selection.....so repertoire will not become part of the tradition unless it's accepted by a community consensus. So in that sense nearly all aspects of traditional music are decided on by what the community agrees upon as its repertoire. I guess a good example of that is the —session!...that little session in a community that you might hear in town, determines what repertoire is worth learning and what isn't worth learning, in that little pocket of the community (JT, Personal Communication, November 14, 2013).

I pushed further wanting to know what the boundaries were and how a particular \_gig\_ for instance would be accepted as traditionally Irish. His response was, —A lot of people have defined Irish traditional music or described it maybe as being traditional because of its

processes...because of its creative processes... It's not just the repertoire that can be seen as traditional but also the interpretation, because if you dig deep enough, all repertoire or a large portion of repertoire is shared among a lot of neighboring islands, so we can't always speak about origins of repertoire, we have to think about it in terms of how we play it. It is how we play it that makes it Irish traditional music! (JT, Personal Communication, November 14, 2013).

SJ was a bit more explicit about this topic; she acknowledged that up until a few years back there was the controversy as to what was traditional and what was not in the Irish context. She highlights the huge debate on what's traditional and what's not, which reached a peak about 10 years ago, but due to the massive popularity of traditional Irish music currently, people seem to have matured enough to realize that there is room for everything. Though, there are still people who try to recreate a past that is according to her "completely imagined", due to the fact that very little is known about Irish traditional music pre-20<sup>th</sup> century. She talked about a dance project "the river dance, the amalgam of influences":

You have —river dance the amalgam of influences!, massively successful worldwide, there was a huge outcry about that destroying the essence of traditional music, but I don't see the evidence of that in the country side or in the pubs, you know so I think there's room for a lot of different types of expression, there's room for an awful lot of different styles of traditional music...and about who decides?, we certainly don't decide here at the university of Limerick. If you were to take a cross-section of the students down there, you would find that some of them come from what they might regard as staunch traditional backgrounds, and they will be involved in that for the rest of their lives, and it's something that's really personally important to them (SJ, Personal Communication, November 18, 2013).

Niall Keegan (NK) also alluded to the strong traditional background of some of the students before coming to the academy when he said —their parents are usually learnt that folk music in the end of the second English folk revival, so they are coming out of that real revival background...our crowd are coming out of a fairly continuous and unbroken history of musical tradition, so the context question is interesting for us, because a lot of them live that context (NK Personal Communication, November 4, 2013).

I wanted as a follow up to find out if the students in the academy were allowed or encouraged to be innovative. According to SJ:

They are and we encourage it, we also encourage the ones who want to stick to \_trad' stuff and we encourage everything in-between. It's very hard. We've kind of avoided and put very strict criteria for what we are looking for from performances, because we want the students to have the creativity to be able to make their own things, we want them to make mistakes; we want the artists to kind of be artistic, we want them to try out new things and feel that they are in a safe environment to do it, that's really important to us as well, we try not to be too prescriptive of what we are looking for, but we would never penalize anybody for being too traditional or too innovative. Never, I mean, we try to base everything on its own merit, if it works or not, if it's technically sound, if it's musically sound. All those kind of bigger issues we would bring to the table, rather than say, —that's not traditional enough.

These questions asked and answered gave me a contextual framework of where Irish traditional music was at in response to my inquiry, also providing basic material for doing further comparative study of the indigenous African music context against its Irish counterpart.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has expounded on how traditional music has been integrated into mainstream third level of music education. It has shed some light on challenges that seem to pose an obstacle in fully mainstreaming indigenous African music in third level institutions in Africa. There exists currently, components of African music practice in most third level school curriculum in Africa, but they are not really the main focus in these curricula, but are rather more like tokenistic modules. The BA Traditional Irish music and dance program at the Irish world academy for music and dance, seems to have encapsulated the theory and performance practice of Irish traditional music, creating a good balance between the traditional music and western art music, and equally giving the students a great opportunity to be creative and innovative in developing themselves musically in a well grounded traditional music program.

### **Recommendations**

From the study findings, there is an absence of a well articulated —otherl music studies in the program. The world today is a global village and studies have shown that a multicultural approach to learning music both in content and practices produces better grounded students. According to Senders and Davidson (2000), —multiculturalism is not a curriculum unit, a special program, a new faculty hire, a weekend workshop or a silk-screened t-shirt – it’s one of the great joys of life. If we wish our students to shed their ethnocentrism and xenophobia’s, we teachers, parents, administrators and community members, must actively seek delight in cultural variety, finding as many different and ongoing ways as we can to bring it into our schools, our homes, our towns and our livesl. There is need for cultural diversity within the music curriculum to reflect the current trends in world music practices, and also to broaden the scope of the students in music appreciation and general musicianship.

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