

The 11th Cultural Diversity in Music Education Conference (CDIME)

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Diversity and Inclusivity – Practices and Pedagogies in Contemporary Music Education

What is the place of multicultural music education in the new Millennium? How can music open public arenas for dealing with plurality and change? How can music promote cultural literacy and bring more diversity into the classroom? What are the musician's perspective on improvisation and transcultural music making?

These were only some of the issues brought up for discussion during the 11th CDIME (Cultural Diversity in Music Education) conference hosted by CARE (UNESCO-NIE Centre for Arts Research in Education), Singapore. This Center was established at the National Institute of Education in April 2009 as part of a region wide network of so-called art education observatories. These centers were spearheaded by UNESCO Asia-Pacific to provide a systematic means of collecting and disseminating the growing body of arts education research in the region, with the aim of supporting advocacy efforts for mainstreaming the arts in education.

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It should be no secret that arts education in many countries of the region occupies a low place in the educational planning and practice. In Cambodia only one percent of all teachers are involved in music teaching. In Laos culture schools for children established to supplement the primary school curriculum by giving education and training in local crafts and art traditions are threatened by closure for lack of funding. And these are no isolated cases. Generations of accumulated local skills and artistic practices are being lost forever for lack of educational opportunities. This affects not only the rich diversity of tribal cultures in the region but the main treasures of what may be considered key national art resources.

It would be impossible in a short space to point to more than a few of the varied presentations and workshops. The tireless music activist Noel Cabangon from the Philippines in a 60 minutes Concert and conversation showed how he uses his music as a means to share his passion for environmental and human rights issues, providing empowerment to the underserved sectors of the community through his songs calling for social change. And Professor Terry Miller of Kent State University warned about the rising intolerance of tolerance in a climate of rising political conservatism and the fall of liberal multiculturalism.

The pioneer of multicultural music education in the US, and a teacher of whole generation of devoted music students from many parts of the world Dr. Patricia Shehan Campell from the University of Washington School of Music in Seattle, Washington in a highly engaging keynote lecture gave an insight into a model design for an intercultural music education course established 30 years ago as a required course within the University's undergraduate program. The passionate lecture concluded with an appeal to "diversify school music programs, to respond to the cultural diversity of our schools and society, and to navigate the tremendous political push-and-pull that bubbles beneath the efforts of everyday teachers to make a difference in a changing world."