THE COMPARATIVE EFFECTS OF THREE ACCOMPANIMENT MEDIA ON THE ROTE SINGING ACHIEVEMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Music Degree in Music Education Research, College of Music

by

Peter Gouzouasis

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The concept of media can be interpreted in many different ways, but in general, a medium is a mode of communication. Communication is fundamental to all types of learning. Teachers use various techniques to teach music activities, and many media are available to communicate music concepts to children. A parent's voice, a group of children's voices, a radio or television commercial, and audio or video recordings are media which may convey the same music message. There is some objective research and much subjective opinion among music educators with regard to the appropriateness of techniques and materials that are used to teach music, but the media through which music techniques and materials are presented have not been studied objectively.

Marshall McLuhan has theorized that different levels of technology have different effects upon human behavior.[1] As man has evolved as a rational being, levels of technology

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[1] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media:The Extensions of Man. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

have included mechanisms of communication that have evolved from facial gestures, hand signals, and speech, to stone tablets, handwritten manuscripts, books printed with movable type, newspapers and magazines, to telegraph systems, telephones, radio, television, motion pictures, and computers. Learning environments are affected by technological innovations in communications media. Communication mechanisms are continuously modified, as efficiently as stone tablets were replaced by handwritten manuscripts. That evolution of communications technology supports McCluhan's hypothesis that the content of any medium is always another medium.*

For example, sound without context has no meaning. It escapes our attention as a communication medium because it has no context. Sound is a medium without a message, a fundamental element of another medium, such as music. When sound in the form of pitches and durations is organized into tonal and rhythm patterns, it becomes a music medium. For example, a melody is a series of tonal patterns and rhythm patterns sounded in combination with one another.

The flow of information in a learning environment is

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*McLuhan, p. 23.

regulated by media that provide a context for elements of learning. The manner in which an individual participates in and interacts with a learning activity, and the information an individual receives from that activity, are functions of that context. Educational materials and teaching techniques facilitate the communication of music information in different ways depending upon characteristics of the media. For example, when compared to a music teacher's rendition of a children's song, a recorded version of a children's song is a sophisticated music medium.

Many music educators are concerned with objective observation or measurement of the effects of teaching techniques and materials upon music learning, but few researchers have dealt with the effects of different dimensions of music media upon music learning. McLuhan's concept of "hot" and "cool" media may be used in music education to categorize combinations of music teaching techniques and materials.

The classification of a medium as hot or cool depends upon relative conceptual and perceptual criteria.[3] When one perceptual sense or conceptual

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[3] McLuhan, p. 24.

mode of thinking is incorporated into a medium it may be categorized as a cool medium, whereas when two or more perceptual senses or conceptual modes of thinking are incorporated into a medium it may be categorized as a hot medium.[4] To hear a tonal pattern that consists of two or three tones involves the sense of hearing and involves the conception of that pattern. To hear a folksong melody that consists of a series of tonal patterns and rhythm patterns sounded in combination with one another also involves the sense of hearing, but additionally involves the conception of tonal patterns, rhythm patterns, and tonal and rhythm patterns sounded in combination. Therefore, the recall or performance of a simple tonal pattern consisting of three pitches is a cool music medium when compared to the recall or performance of a folk song. That is so because the melody of a folk song consists of a combination of tonal and rhythm elements. The model in Figure 1 is based upon that principle, and it illustrates the relationship between selected examples of cool and hot music media.

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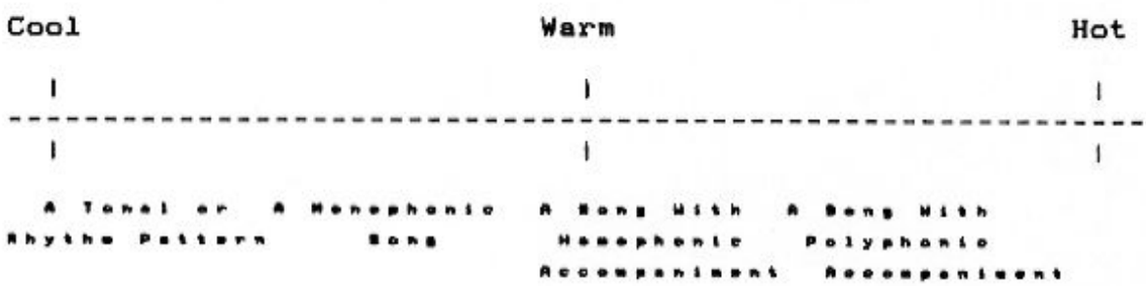
[4] McLuhan, p. 36.

FIGURE 1

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COOL AND HOT MUSIC MEDIA



The "definition" of a medium is another concept that distinguishes cool media from hot media.[5] The content of all media are given definition by the participant. For example, the reader of a book uses his imagination to visualize the scenes of the plot in his mind. The perception of words on the page of a book involves the sense of sight, and the reader participates further through his active imagination. Cool media are high in participation because little information is given and much has to be provided by the participant.[6] Because cool visual media and cool music media have few dimensions, there is less information to be perceived and much must be conceived by the participant. Analogous to the relationship between cool

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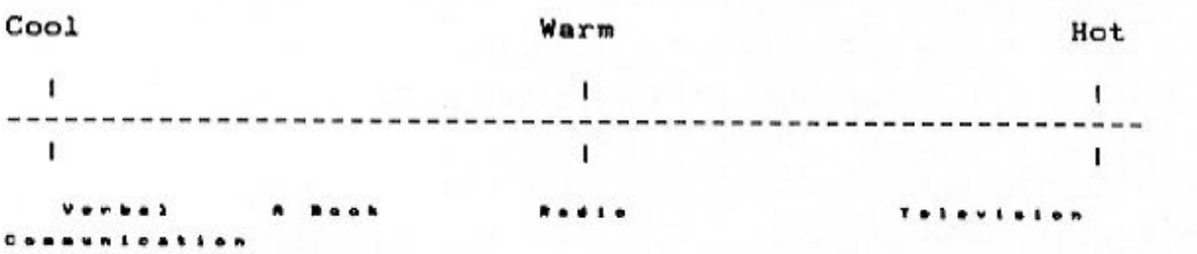
[5] McLuhan, p. 36.

[6] McLuhan, p. 36.

and hot music media, the relationship between cool and hot communication media is illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COOL AND HOT COMMUNICATION MEDIA



A unitonal/unimetric melody[7] without text is a cool music medium in which a listener's attention is focused upon specific music information. When a child hears an unaccompanied performance of a traditional folksong, exclusive of text, only the tonal and rhythmic aspects of the song are presented to him. To perform the folksong with good intonation, the child uses basic aural discrimination skills to conceive the characteristic tones and cadential

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[7] The terms "unitonal" and "unimetric" are used to describe music with only one part. A unitonal melody consists of one tonality. A unimetric melody consists of one meter. For a complete discussion of the taxonomy of tonalities and meters see Chapters Three and Four in Learning Sequences in Music: Skill, Content and Patterns: A Music Learning Theory by Edwin E. Gordon. (Chicago: G.I.A. Publications, 1984).

patterns of the song. An unaccompanied folksong is a cool music medium when compared to a folksong accompanied by homophonic chord changes strummed on an acoustic guitar, because in the latter case the tonal patterns of the melody are defined by the harmonic accompaniment provided by the guitar. A folksong accompanied by homophonic chord changes strummed on an acoustic guitar is a cool music medium when compared to a folksong accompanied by homophonic and polyphonic chord changes performed on an electric guitar, because polyphonic accompaniment patterns are hotter than homophonic accompaniment patterns. Furthermore, all electronic media are generally categorized by McLuhan as hot media. Because of the relationship between non-accompaniment, homophonic accompaniment with an acoustic guitar, and polyphonic accompaniment with an electric guitar, the aforementioned types of accompaniment may be considered as cool, warm, and hot music media respectively.

In summary, hot and cool media need to be categorized on the basis of the relationship among the media to be studied. Furthermore, music media may be classified and compared according to many dimensions. Music, and the medium chosen to communicate a music "message," may encompass many dimensions. Rhythm and tonal patterns are the basic components of all levels of music media. Tonal

and rhythm patterns may be combined in various ways to create music media that range from cool to hot. Monophonic music, or music that incorporates only one part, is a cool music medium. Unitonal and unimetric patterns are unidimensional and cool, whereas multimetric[8] and multitonal[9] patterns are multidimensional and hot. Unitonal and unimetric music is bidimensional and cool, whereas multitonal and multimetric music is multidimensional and hot. Polyphonic music, or music that incorporates two or more simultaneously sounding parts, is a hot music medium. Monotonal[10] and monometric[11] music is monodimensional and cool, whereas polytonal[12] and

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[8] The term "multimetric" is used to describe music with only one part, but consists of two or more meters. See Gordon, p.132-134.

[9] The term "multitonal" is used to describe music with only one part, but consists of two or more tonalities. See Gordon, p. 67-68.

[10] Monotonal music consists of harmonic patterns that are in the same tonality as the melodic part that they support. See Gordon, p.94.

[11] The term "monometric" is used to describe music that has two or more simultaneously sounding parts. Monometric music consists of one meter. See Gordon, p.134.

[12] Polytonal music incorporates two or more tonalities in two or more simultaeously sounding parts. See Gordon, p. 94-99.

polymetric[13] music is polydimensional and hot.

Based on those concepts, songs that are considered appropriate for young children are usually unitonal or monotonal, and unimetric and monometric, whereas most popular music is polyphonic, polytonal, polymetric, or a combination thereof. When exposed to a cool music medium, such as a folk song sung a capella or with simple accompaniment, children hear and audiate the essential tonal and rhythm patterns of the melody. In contrast, when exposed to a hot music medium such as a popular song performed with melodic and harmonic accompaniment, young children hear the music, but they may have difficulty audiating particular aspects of the music. For that reason, simple rhymes or nursery songs performed a capella are probably conceptualized differently than a highly defined music medium such as rock and roll.

Young children experience music through a limited number of media in their home environment. For young children, music media are usually presented in an informal learning situation and music experiences are usually provided primarily by parents and siblings. Playing music games, chanting, dancing, and singing songs a capella are

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[13]Polymetric music incorporates two or more meters in two or more simultaneously sounding parts. See Gordon, p.134-139.

examples of cool music activities. Many children learn those music acts by imitating other children and adults.[10] Imitation of music that has been heard previously from a cool music source is a cool music activity.

Although children may experience a limited number of cool music media informally, it is reasonable to suggest that the major portion of a child's music learning experiences are derived from hot media: multidimensional music heard and seen on records, radio, television, and other electronic media. Television also provides the visual aspect of perception to the music learning experience. Moreover, the repetition of songs and commercial jingles heard on radio and television provides the stimulus for conscious or unconscious audiation and imitation of hot, musically-oriented material.

Information can be communicated to a potentially larger audience through electronic media, particularly mass media. All electronic media are generally categorized by McLuhan as hot media. Electronic media are sophisticated modes of communication because they reprocess pre-existing information

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[10]Gladys Evelyn Moorehead and Donald Pond, Music of Young Children (Santa Barbara, California: Pillsbury Foundation for Advancement of Music Education, 1977), p.34.