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Cultural Metaphor and Music: A Syncretic Bicultural Teaching Experience in a Navajo High School

Spider Woman instructed the Navajo women how to weave on a loom which Spider Man told them how to make. The crosspoles were made of sky and earth cords, the warp sticks of sheet lightning. The batten was a sun halo, white shell made the comb. There were four spindles: one a stick of zigzag lightning with a whorl of camel coal; one a stick of flash lightning with a whorl of turquoise; a third had a stick of sheet lightning with a whorl of abalone; a rain streamer formed the stick of the fourth and its whorl was white shell.

—Gladys Reichard, *Navajo Shepherd and Weaver*

The picture of an interconnected cosmic web which emerges from modern atomic physics has been used extensively in the East to convey the mystical experience of nature. For the Hindus, *Brahman* is the unifying thread in the cosmic web, the ultimate ground of all being: He on whom the sky, the earth, and the atmosphere are woven, and the wind, together with all life-breaths, Him alone is known as the one Soul. In Buddhism, the image of the cosmic web plays an even greater role. The core of the *Avatamska Sutra*, one of the main scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism, is the description of the world as a perfect network of mutual relations where all things and events interact in an infinitely complicated way . . . The cosmic web, finally, plays a central role in Tantric Buddhism. The scriptures of this school are called the *Tantras*, a word whose Sanskrit root means “to weave” and which refers to the interwovenness and interdependence of all things and events.

—Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*

[Tayo] took off his jacket and covered the deer’s head. “Why did you do that?” asked Rocky, motioning at the jacket with the blade of his knife . . . Tayo didn’t say anything, because they both knew why. The people said you should do that before you gutted the deer. Out of respect. But Rocky was funny about those things. He was an A-student and all-state in football and track. He had to win; he said he was always going to win. So he listened to his teachers, and he listened to his coach. They were proud of him. They told him, “Nothing can stop you now except one thing: don’t let the people at home hold you back.” Rocky understood what he had to do to win in the white outside world. After their first year at boarding school in Albuquerque, Tayo saw how Rocky deliberately avoided the old-time ways. Old Grandma shook her head at him, but he called it superstition, and he opened his textbooks to show her. But Auntie never scolded him, and she never let Robert or Josiah talk to him either. She wanted him to be a success. She could see what white people wanted in an Indian, and she believed this was his only chance too, after all the village gos-

sip about their family. When Rocky was a success, no one would dare to say anything against them anymore.

—Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

The third quotation above puts into vivid relief a core dilemma for young Native Americans in dealing with the world about them: whether and how far to assimilate the white man's ways. In Leslie Marmon Silko's masterpiece, the main character Tayo, who is half white and half Native American, has come back from the Korean War and must struggle to remain alive and embrace his identity. He is torn between drinking and carousing with his war buddies or rejecting them and facing the possibility they may destroy him. Later he is guilt-ridden and confused because his half-white brother Rocky, groomed to be the family leader, has been killed in the war. This passage helps us to understand Tayo's feelings along with those of contemporary Indian students who are being encouraged to reject their culture in lieu of the "better" white one and it helps to clarify the challenges my students encountered on a daily basis. Insight into the problems that exist in the educational system could help Indian students develop the resolve not to allow their identities to be annihilated or subjugated, which has been an effect of all government-controlled educational systems for Native Americans and other indigenous peoples throughout history.

In our age of particularism it is of genuine concern that a sense of holism, a sense of connectedness with the universe, is being lost. The whole person, whole earth, and whole system within which we interrelate has been fragmented, limiting the possibilities for cultures to interact and grow stronger through mutual sharing and support. Further, this fragmentation undermines our wholeness as individuals. Yet, all materials needed to repair the fragmented pieces and successfully bring wholeness back into being are available. We must allow paradigms based on fearful stereotypes, separation, and categorization of people and cultures, to be replaced with those recognizing wholeness and relatedness.

This article describes my experience at Tuba City High School, a Native American school in northeast Arizona where I taught music for three years, and will demonstrate that even in a system dominated by old paradigms and rigid categories, student failure can be circumvented and a quality educational experience provided.

I will discuss and explore the concept and process of bridging elements from different cultures. Using Navajo rug weaving and the European Baroque fugue as examples, I will suggest how a sense of holism can be achieved within a particular culture and provide a cross-cultural, positive, life-affirming bridge. Such specific projects provide a means by which responsible educational leaders can become cross-culturally literate and foster the practice of bridging cultures—building fellowship rather than fragmenting cultures internally or separating different cultures from one other. All too often elements from dominant cultures are used to demonstrate an alleged superiority. Creating the impression that one culture is superior to another and practicing divisiveness within a culture must

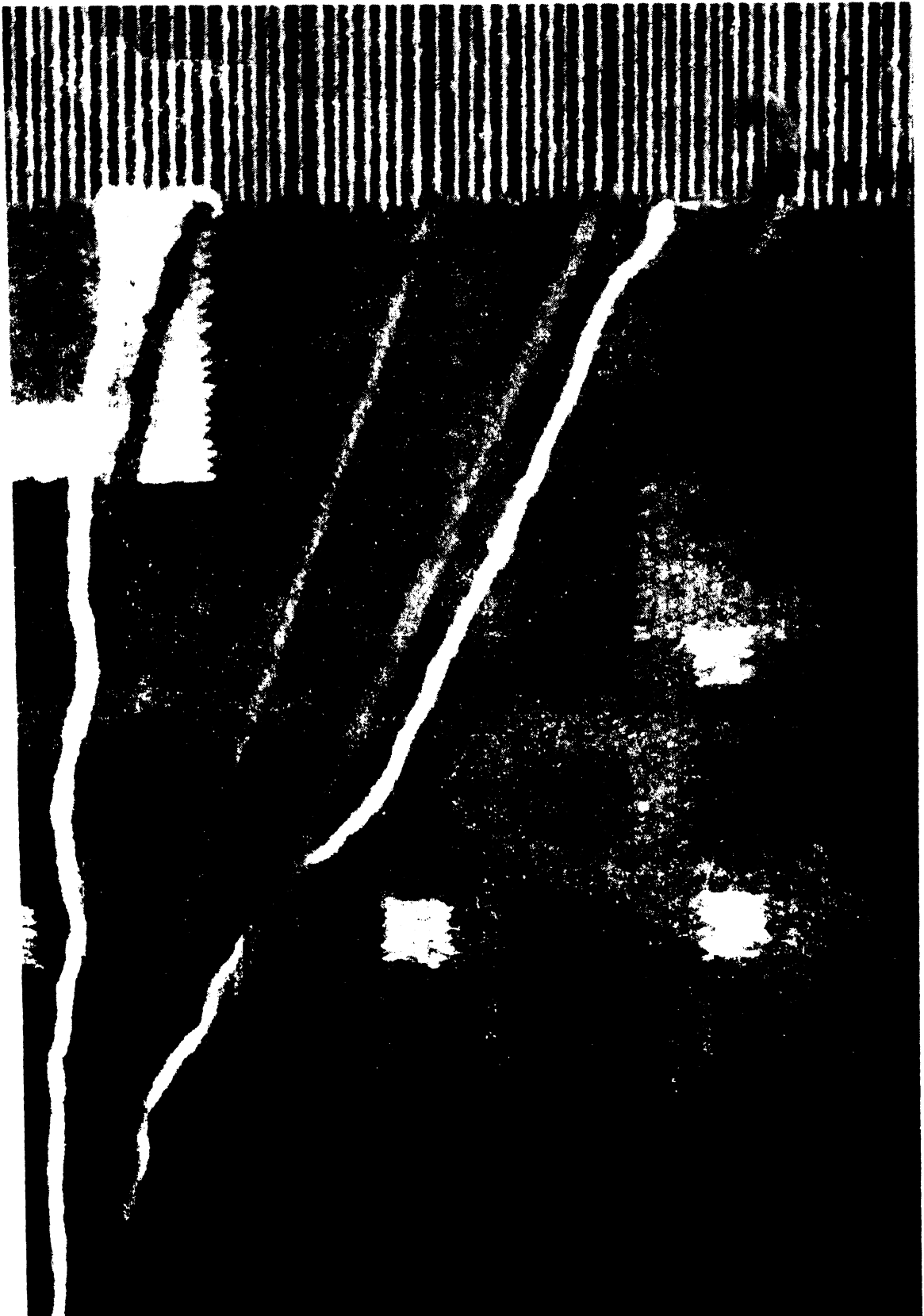


Figure 1. A weaving in process.

(Photograph by John Running. Courtesy of John Running and Northland Press).

be avoided by educators if we intend to prevent high rates of drop-out, suicide, alcoholism, and drug-abuse.¹ Teachers can and must take the lead in shattering unhealthy patterns that perpetuate disintegration.

The Wholeness of the Navajo

The Navajo occupy a vast land-mass in the Four Corners area of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. This area has been called the Heart Center of the Earth by many Native Americans. Most of the Navajo Reservation, established in 1868 by the Federal government, lies in northeast Arizona. It is a land of dramatic contrasts, erosion, and upheaval on the far southern area of the Colorado Plateau. This immense plateau has slowly risen over millions of years resulting in deeply carved canyons, steep mesas, buttes, and escarpments. Sandstone predominates, easily sculpted by wind and water. Hot summers and bitterly cold winters create a harsh environment, yet it has become home to people and wildlife alike who have adapted to its condition.

In large part, the Navajo's adaptability—also characteristic of other Native American Indian groups found in the area, demonstrated by increasing Indian and non-Indian populations throughout the Southwest—disproves those who have called the high desert region uninhabitable. A reservation formerly seen as isolated and penetrable only with great difficulty and fortitude is now fully accessible and viewed with much interest by corporate developers, who covet the abundance of coal and uranium and other natural resources found throughout the area. Although outside interests continue to move in, the Navajo adapt to even these encroachments with remarkable resiliency; they reaffirm their tribal identity through various ceremonial and social avenues. White settlers with opposing and imposing educational and political systems have historically had little interest in supporting and protecting the collective self-esteem and pride of the Indian. Because Native American cultures are traditionally holistic, it is ironic that attempts are still being made to assimilate them into a way of thinking that engenders separation and superficial material values. While the Navajo have shown a strong adaptability, exemplified by their population growth in the twentieth century, conformity to white ways frequently is not in their best interest, particularly when its price is the loss of Indian identity.

Holism is a hallmark of traditional Native American customs and lifeways. Proper attention and care are given to the cycles of natural phenomena—the journey from birth through adolescence and middle to old age, the earth's unending cycle of decay and renewal through the four seasons. All these serve to connect the parts to a whole system, Wholeness (*hózhó*) is affirmed through identification with natural cycles. In spite of this, both whites and assimilated Indians act to perpetuate a fear-based separatist educational system that produces disharmony, or a state of imbalance (*hóchxó*) within the individual person and culture.

Fortunately, recent trends in which tribal people are themselves assuming responsibility and taking action to bring a holistic educational approach back

into the classroom are showing some success. Rather than being forced to deny their ethnic background in order to buy into mainstream materialistic ideals, Indian students are being encouraged to embrace it, by those who understand that retaining and integrating a strong sense of identity provides a powerful source from which they may draw strength and balance. On this foundation of self-knowledge, they can learn to bridge and transcend barriers that exist among their own, Anglo and world cultures.

Personal Contact with the Navajo

I was drawn to the Southwest for the first time in the fall of 1984 when a friend and I hiked the North Kaibab Trail in the Grand Canyon. This trek had a profound influence on me, and I decided to relocate to this land within a year. The vastness of the landscape and the beauty of the Indian connection with the elements and respect for “Mother Earth” and “Father Sky” felt natural within my own spirit and vastly different from the industrial East Coast where I grew up. Moving to the Southwest from North Carolina became a grand spiritual quest as well. Prior to this time I had been studying Native American cultures and had become very interested in the field of ethnomusicology. I had also become interested in shamanism and shamanic healing. So I was naturally drawn to the Southwest with its medicine men and women who still practice the world’s “oldest religion,” as shamanism has been called. In order to incorporate this wisdom into my own musical and spiritual practices, I envisioned learning firsthand from native practitioners, how healing is achieved through music, ritual, and prayer.

As a teacher trained in Western European music, I began working in 1986 for Tuba City High School, located in the west-central part of the reservation. Having become disillusioned and dissatisfied with the formality and systems of Euro-American classical music, however, I hoped my intuitive feeling that in Native American societies music might be understood and taught in a broader all-encompassing way would prove true. I sensed that theirs was a more holistic, purposeful experience of sound, which did not separate performer from audience or musician from nonmusician. Primarily, my goal was to learn from traditional Navajo culture in order to become a successful teacher of predominantly Navajo students. I submerged myself in Navajo music and other community activities. I attended the Native American Church (NAC), Navajo ceremonials, and Navajo and Plains-style sweat lodges. I worked with Navajo and other Native American singers and leaders, such as Steve Darden, Buddy Red Bow, Floyd Westerman, and Sharon Burch. I studied and participated in North American Indian music and dance. But my most revealing and enlightening experience proved to be working with students.²

Music and the Navajo World View

Navajo (*Dine*) Indian culture and Navajo music are inseparable. In the Navajo world a singer (*hataatii*) is synonymous with a medicine man who leads

ceremonies. Even the name for the large Chantway rituals is *hatáál* (“sing” or “singing”). Furthermore, music and prayer constitute a complementary pair in the Navajo system of thought, but one example of the many such pairs that form the basis of Navajo philosophy. Music and prayer were among the first items the *Diyin Dine’ é*, or Holy People, placed inside the original Navajo hogan, along with sacred objects, fire, water, corn, food, fruits, meat, blessings, and the clan system (Aronilth 1988:176).

From the Navajo Creation myth the overall world view of the Navajo may be understood. The universal creative force is seen as existing in a state of *hózhó*, harmony or balance. Various human misbehaviors create *hochxó*, or imbalance for the individual in relation to his emotional, physical and spiritual world. The purpose of the numerous Navajo ceremonies is to restore the “one-sung-over” to a state of *hózhó*. The Navajo world view is thus best understood as a grand cosmic balancing of forces, with the goal of walking the central corn pollen path, remaining in equilibrium with all aspects of creation.

Song originates in Navajo mythology at the very beginning of creation and provides a blueprint from which the re-creation of *hózhó* is possible. It has many functions. Songs are reenactments of the mythic past, a root system through which nutrients flow. Songs serve to identify the *Dine*. According to Navajo scholar Gladys Reichard, “the primary function of song is to preserve order, [and] to coordinate the ceremonial symbols” (Reichard 1983:288). Song has absolute power in restoring the condition of *hózhó*.

Music in the Navajo universe has the power to protect and command the *Diyin Dine’ é*. In the ceremonial healing process the patient, hearing songs and prayers and seeing symbols and sand paintings, and other ritual paraphernalia, is moved to a state of psycho-spiritual union with these elements. He is thus restored fully to health, completeness, beauty, etc.

The pair of polar opposites through which *hózhó* is manifested, *Sq’ah Naagháii* and *Bik’eh Hózhó* (usually translated as “long life” and “happiness,” respectively), are key concepts for understanding the role of music among the Navajo. All of creation originates from this pair, which may be understood to simultaneously represent many other polarities: maleness/femaleness, stasis/activity, and thought/speech. Among mythic personae these two are the parents of Changing Woman, who in turn is the mother of the *Dine*. Their names are used in almost every song and prayer found in the many rites of the Navajo. Because they are viewed as the “grandparents” of humanity and indeed all life, these beings comprise the very animating force of the universe without which there would be no possibility of life. This pair has both an inner spiritual as well as outer material form and relationship. As Wyman and Witherspoon have explained:

Sq’ah Naagháii and *Bik’eh Hózhó* represent the underlying bipolar inner/outer symmetry of the universe. *Sq’ah Naagháii* is the inner form of *Bik’eh Hózhó*.

which is the outer form of *Sq'ah Naagháii*. . . The dynamic, fertile and omnipotent union of these two dimensions of the universe is what produces *hózhó*, beauty, harmony and well-being [a] holistic symmetry (Wyman 1970:398; Witherspoon [n. d.] *Holistic Symmetry*, chap. 2:9).

To summarize, then, the *Diyin Dine'é*, with the exception of Changing Woman who represents *hózhó* exclusively, are powerful beings having dual natures, both helpful and dangerous. Through music the *Diyin Dine'é* are commanded to restore a patient's health, and music aids this restoration by providing access to the powerful pair *Sq'ah Naagháii/Bi'ke Hózhó*.

Throughout Navajo prayers and songs one finds many instances of word repetition and a stress on precision. Repetition increases the strength of prayers and songs. Exact recitation is considered crucial for restraint and focus. Through precise rendition, the singer commands the prayer or song. Careless renditions may be either dangerous or ineffectual. Repetition reinforces the cure. Gary Witherspoon writes, "Repetition is a motif found all through Navajo life and culture. It is associated with the concepts of renewal, regeneration, rejuvenation, revolution, and restoration. Repetition enhances the compulsive power of the song" (Witherspoon 1977:155-156).

Words are also multiply identified with the "one sung over" in a ritually protected space. A host of associated words create a kind of linguistic barrier against disorder. In the Navajo Beautyway prayer, for example, recurring motifs include the four compass points, usually in the clockwise order of east, south, west, and north, and sometimes the nadir and zenith as two additional directions. This prayer also contains the words *shiláqji* (in front of me), *shikida* (behind me), *shiyáqji* (below me), *shikahdi* (above me), and *shinaadee* (from me). These space words have the power to locate and link the singer and the "one-sung-over" with beauty and strength (again translated as *hózhó*). Together with the four directions they form a powerful circle serving as a shield of protection around the singer and patient. The phrase *hózhó náhásdlii'* at the end of the stanzas means "beauty has been restored," bringing the ceremony back to the present, i.e., real time, out of ritual time. This phrase is repeated four times (the number four is perhaps the most prominent recurring thematic motif within the complex structure in Navajo song and prayer), and the universe, that is, the balanced web of social and natural forces surrounding the patient, is experienced again by the him as settled and orderly.

Because Navajo ceremonial is so specifically word-dependent, one of the most crucial factors threatening the maintenance of Navajo music is the decline of the Navajo language. Ceremonial songs and prayers must not be altered. Oral tradition is the primary vehicle by which this music is passed down, and Navajo is the language used. Therefore, it is crucial that the Navajo language be mastered by the singers and participants to insure the continuity of this musical tradition.

Weaving the Fugue

To relate all the enlightening experiences I enjoyed while teaching and interacting with many talented students would go beyond the scope of this article. However, I will discuss in detail one particular experience in my Honor's Music Theory and Composition class: teaching my students to compose Baroque fugal compositions using the Navajo rug as a metaphor. The only prerequisite for this course was the successful completion of a semester of general music theory and appreciation. Further musical background or knowledge was helpful though not required.

The Navajo are extremely skilled artists and craftspeople. Indeed, in Navajo society it is the nonartist who is seen as unusual (as opposed to the common characterization of Western artists as a nonconforming, potentially disruptive minority). After teaching my predominantly Indian students various Western European and American musical compositions and techniques, I found that they revealed a striking ability to translate their traditional skills and craftsmanship into writing and understanding music.

While playing for class an orchestral arrangement of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Organ Fugue in G Minor* (BWV 578) (Figure 2) to demonstrate Baroque contrapuntal styles and tonal concepts, I suddenly perceived that I could relate Navajo culture to this music by comparing it to Navajo rug weaving. The great skill, artistry, and imagination many Navajo women (and some men) demonstrate on the weaving loom is closely related to music, particularly that of the Baroque Period in which counterpoint, or the inter-weaving of various melodies, results in a finished piece of music. My students demonstrated a strong affinity for the contrapuntal nature of Bach's music, particularly when connected to the cultural metaphor of weaving. They were especially adept at perceiving aspects of form, texture, and voicing in an orchestral arrangement of the organ fugue in which the various characteristic timbres of different instruments were distinctly audible. It became clear to me that the compositional techniques used in the fugue, taught via the Navajo rug, could be applied immediately by my students to their own music writing. With steady encouragement, they each composed individual fugues over the course of the semester, a task usually attempted at the college level and requiring painstaking study and practice.

It will be obvious even to the novice musician that the metaphor of rug weaving is appropriate for canonic music in Western culture. In a fugue a primary melody, or *subject* as it is properly called, is used as the basis for an entire composition. Even though a second melody, or *countersubject* may be employed, the work always returns to and revolves around the primary subject. Fugues generally have three or four voices, or musical parts, appearing in different ranges. The subject enters in each voice or part, one after the other until all initial statements (generally three or four) which make up the expository section have been sounded. This layering of various strands of sound has a two-dimensional result: vertical harmonic events (i.e., consonant chords) occur as

FUGUE.
G-moll.

Manual.

Pedal.

The musical score is written for Manual and Pedal. The Manual part is on a grand staff (treble and bass clef), and the Pedal part is on a single bass clef staff. The score shows the first three measures of the exposition, where the subject is introduced in the Manual and then in the Pedal. The subject is a descending eighth-note scale: G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The score is in G minor (two flats) and common time. The first measure shows the Manual entering with the subject, followed by the Pedal. The second measure shows the Manual continuing the subject while the Pedal plays a supporting bass line. The third measure shows the Manual and Pedal continuing their respective parts.

Figure 2. Exposition of Bach's *Organ Fugue in G Minor* showing entrances of the subject.

does horizontal forward motion, as the parts overlap with each other and the non-subject melodies from beginning to end. The overall texture of the music becomes thicker and denser as the voices enter. The structural power achieved by this repetition of the subject within this Western formal musical context clearly appealed to my students who had experienced the potency of motivic repetition in a Navajo ritual-verbal context (described above). As the students became more familiar with contrapuntal techniques, they could understand and appreciate even more complex contrapuntal music.

Figure 3 is a simple diagram of a generic fugue in which the various parts and formal sections are shown. These include the *exposition* (initial entrances of all statements of the subject), *episodes* in which no subject is used, *counterpoint* in which freedom of composition is characteristic though still written according to various rules, *stretto* in which the subject is used in a closely interlocking manner in two or more voices, and the *recapitulation* and/or *coda* which ends the fugue with one or more statements of the subject. (This brief description and example of a fugue explains only the general form; individual works are frequently much more complex.)

During my tenure at the high school, Navajo weavers, primarily women, wove as part of the dormitory cultural enrichment program and in the community at large. As I became more familiar with weaving techniques and styles, the connection between the basic compositional format of a fugue and the techniques in rug weaving became more and more apparent. In weaving, various colors are intertwined on the loom to create a consistent and balanced design. In fugues, a subject or specific arrangement of musical pitches is woven on the musical staff (which could be seen as a horizontal loom!) into a tapestry of sound. In both, the artist/composer begins with a single thread adding another and yet another to create a visual or aural object. As these musical threads (or horizontal wefts to use weaving terminology) are woven through the musical staff or vertical warps attached to the loom, they combine to create various blends, both musical and visual. The imagination of the weaver is manifested in the visual symbols, designs, colors, and patterns created. Visual art and musical art become very similar creative artistic expressions, both using repeated motifs, larger forms, tone color contrasts and other elements to illustrate or demonstrate either active rhythmic energy or stasis to the eye or ear. The diamond (two triangles sharing a single base) is the basic cultural motif of Navajo weaving. The two other major motifs of the Navajo nation are the hairbun (or symbol of Child Born-for-Water) and the bow (symbol of Monster Slayer). These twins, with weapons given to them by their father the Sun, slew monsters who were devouring and destroying the Navajo. They were helped in this heroic endeavor by Grandmother Spider who serves as a guardian helper and guide in many traditional Native American myths. Both these symbols may be combined to generate the diamond, a four-sided structure (Example 5), which is the symbol of Changing Woman, a benevolent deity who is said to be the inner form of the earth and who presides over the Blessingway Ceremony, the most important ritual for maintaining and perpetuating *hózhó*.

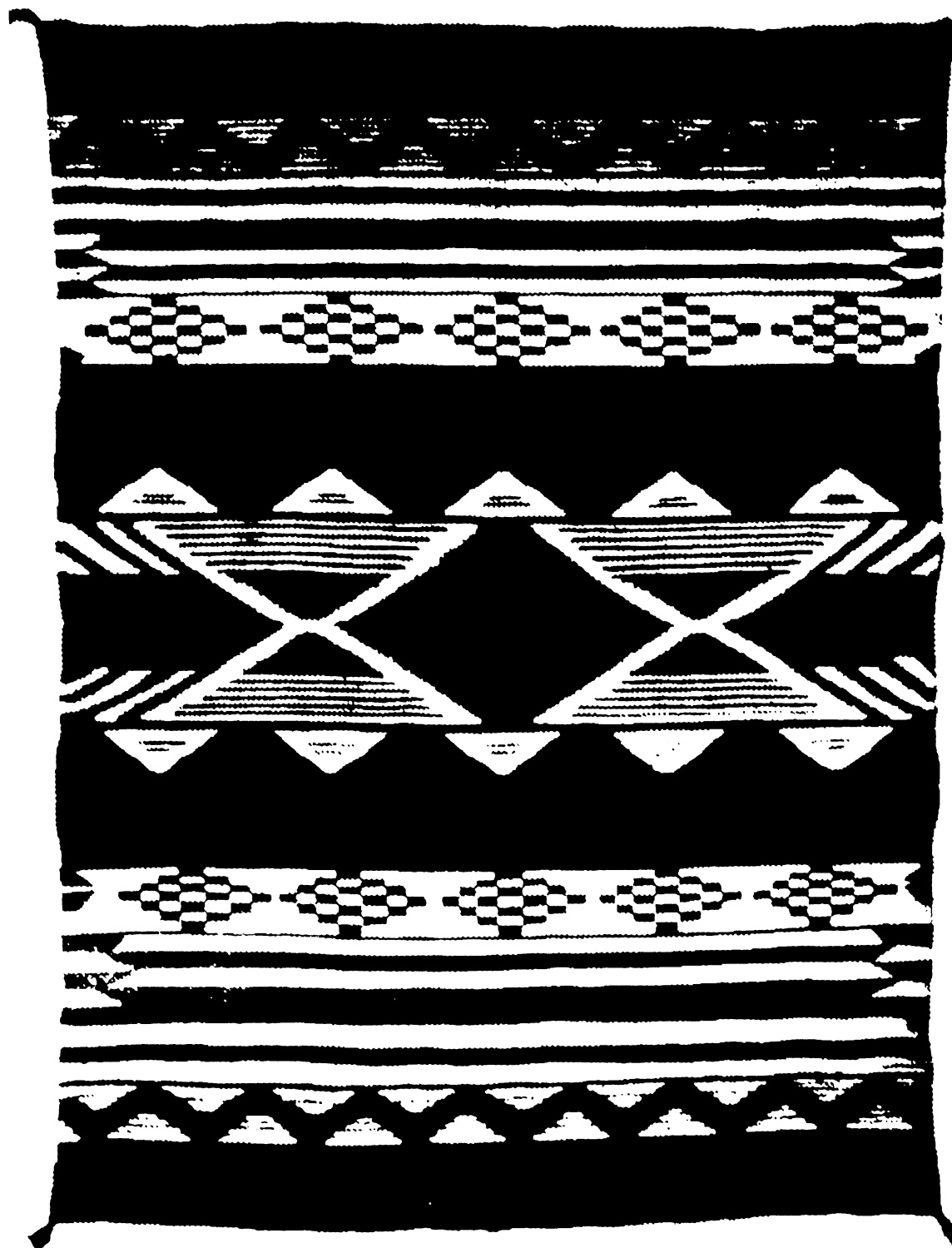


Figure 3. Navajo rug design showing basic geometrical motifs.
(Uncaptioned photograph from Gary Witherspoon, unpublished paper)

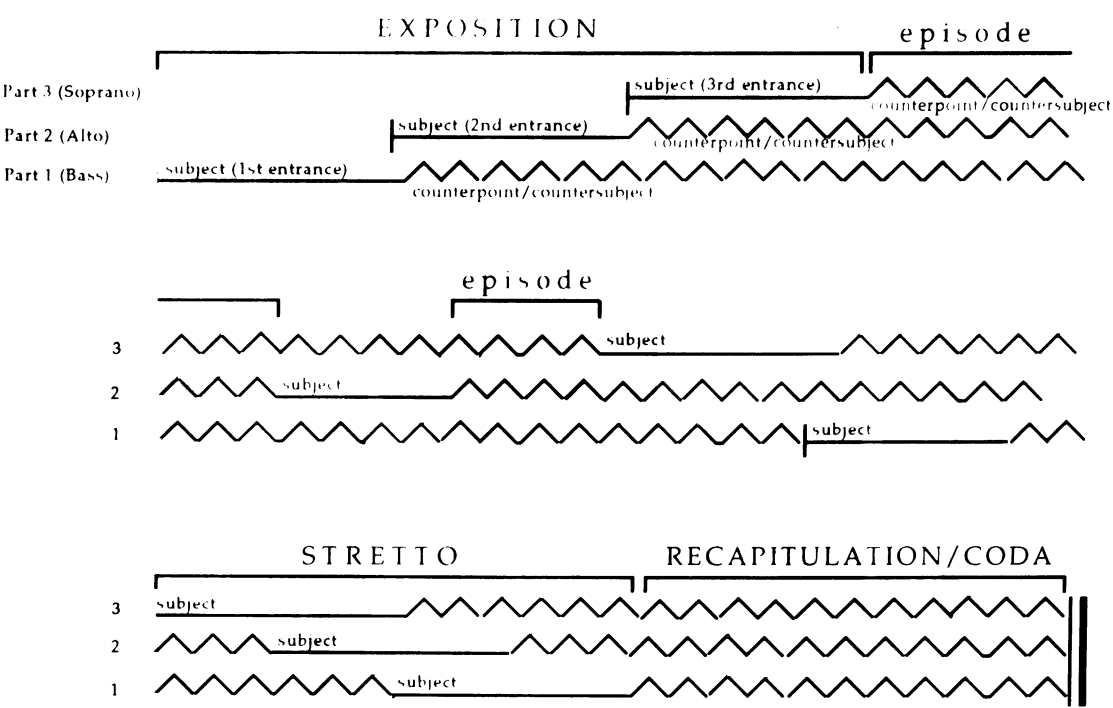


Figure 4. Fugue Diagram.

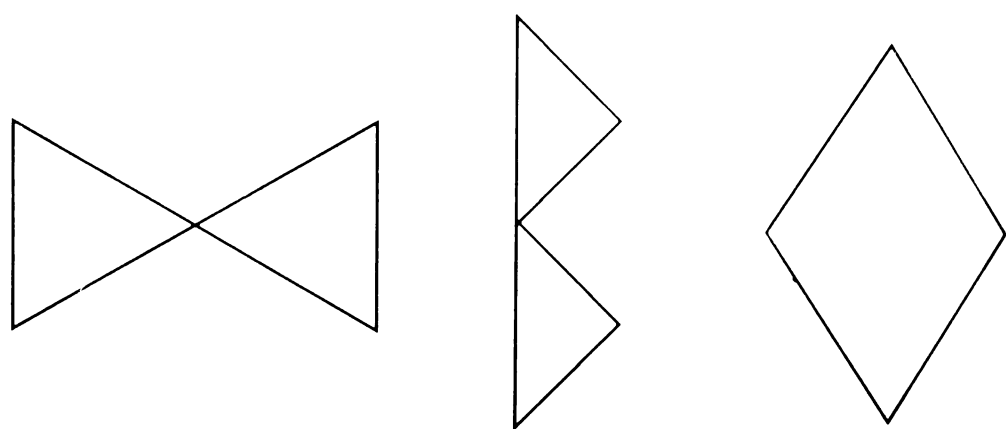


Figure 5. Symbols for Child Born-for-Water, Monster Slayer, and Changing Woman.

These motifs, because of their triadic structure, may intertwine and/or regenerate to form unique and interesting patterns. They may be subjected to variation in accordance with the weaver’s imagination, artistic desires, aesthetics, and mythic goals. The connections to musical technique are also clear. Basic shapes and pictorial elements may be shaped in ways directly analogous to musical development. Just as a fugal melody may be subjected to various transformations, so a triangle or diamond can be treated to diminution, augmentation, inversion, retrograde, contraction, expansion, fragmentation, or a combination of these, limited only by the imagination of the weaver. (Figure 6). If these specific derivative techniques are not desired, free composition may be used. (Figure 7).

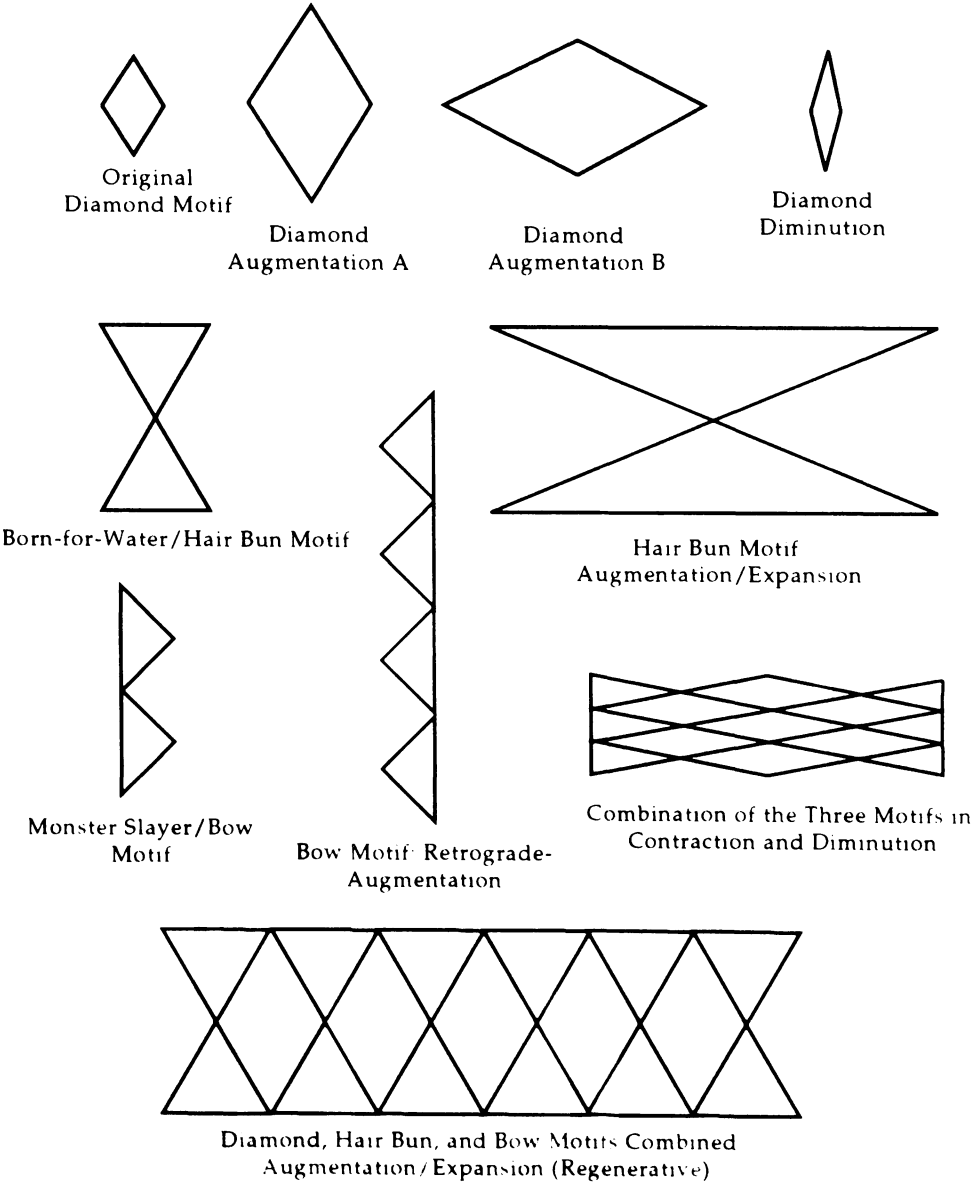


Figure 6. Variations of basic Navajo motifs.

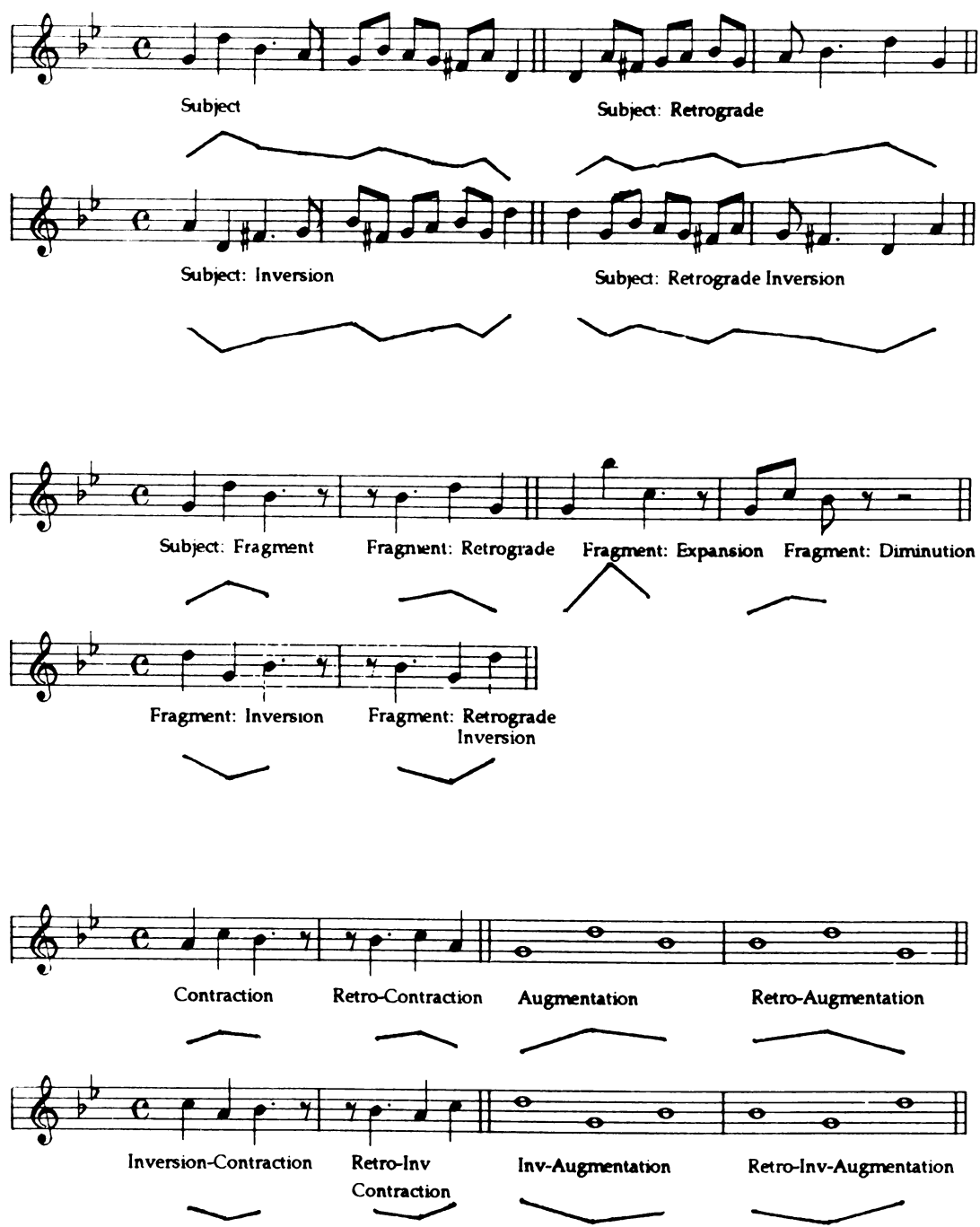


Figure 7. Variations of basic musical motifs or subjects reduced to geometric shapes.

In music, as in weaving, one may create a subject that can be reduced to its basic geometric shape or contour and then manipulated. This shared geometric quality of music and weaving provides the bridge from one to the other. Just as Navajo weaving may be reduced to three basic cultural motifs, and these to a single denominator, the triangle, a fugue may be reduced to its basic subject (and smaller musical cells) from which all is generated. In the subject, the single denominator is comprised of the notes or pitches from which the overall contour of the subject is created. The triangle in Navajo design is an average value around which variations—the hair bun, bow, and diamond—may cluster and be generated. Musical subjects and Navajo motivic designs, when transformed through the process of creative imagination, lend interest and aesthetic value to the finished work; indeed, the work is the sum total of these generative transformations.

A belief in the power of organic generation and regeneration is central to Navajo and other American Indian lifeways. Native Americans respect the life cycle and its reproductive/regenerative aspects. Professor Gary Witherspoon states,

In Western world view and in classical science, the ontological focus has been on the fundamental and smallest building blocks of the universe that can be isolated. . . . Accordingly, Westerners have focused their attention on primary elements. . . . The focus of Navajo ontology is not on the particle, the element or the individual, but on the whole and the links, the connections and relationships that unite the parts of a whole (Witherspoon [n. d.] *Holistic Symmetry*, chap. 2:9).

Professor Witherspoon terms the Western world view “atomistic” and the Navajo world view “holistic,” meaning that the former tends to view the world as a system of unconnected and unrelated parts, while the latter views the parts as connected in a vast web of interrelatedness. In the latter it is not possible to harm or affect any one part without affecting the whole.

The traditional Navajo give attention and respect to life passages and value the journey from birth to old age as one of great beauty. Even here, a correlation may be made with the fugue, in which a cycle also exists. Sounds heard in the initial statement of the subject may represent birth. Then various episodes and developments occur, like the life stages of adolescence and middle age. Finally, in the coda or the culminating stretto, the subject is heard one final time or concatenated at a high level of intensity after having journeyed throughout the whole. The cycle culminates in old age, or full maturation, the subject never having lost its connection to the entire structure. The subject is the very soul of the fugue. The music would not exist without the subject and vice-versa, just as one cannot have a full life without the challenges of birth, adolescence, maturity and death. The process of life demonstrated in the fugue also permeates traditional Navajo lifeways and ceremonials which stress connection to seasonal change, the spiritual and geographic boundaries of their home, the visiting of

sacred places, and the sacred cyclic journey of each person from birth to death amidst the interconnected structures of life.

* * *

From January to May, 1988, fourteen students in Honor's Music Theory and Composition worked diligently composing fugues, conscious of "rules" of writing and with additional insights and examples from the metaphor of Navajo rug weaving. Thirteen wrote three-voice fugues for string trio while one of my seniors wrote a four-voice fugue for string quartet. This project was so successful that at the end of the semester a professional string ensemble from Flagstaff was brought to the high school to perform the fugues, with a Navajo rug serving as background. One of these pieces is included in Appendix A.

Because this course was designed as preparation for college music study, requirements and expectations were considerable. The students came from varying musical and academic backgrounds, ranging from no previous musical experience except the introductory music appreciation class to extensive performing experience in junior and high school band. All exhibited strong ability to learn and achieve.

Their achievement was especially gratifying because I frequently overheard statements in the school made by administrators, counselors, teachers, parents, and students alike that some of the Indian students, particularly those with more traditional beliefs and habits living in the dormitories in the tribally-operated contract building, were not as capable as those who were more "assimilated" and perhaps in denial of their true Indian ethnicity. This negativity became so pervasive and intolerable that the tribal contract school and public school, both of which served 95% Navajo students, were forced to split apart into separate buildings. No longer would the tribally-operated contract school accept that these students must be taught the same as predominantly non-Indian students in such places as Flagstaff or Phoenix. Government-mandated assimilation at Tuba City High School since the 1960s, and in other reservation schools since the nineteenth century, is at last being questioned openly and bravely by tribal members and others who are striving to begin the process of empowering Indian youth.²

My students, comprised of both dormitory (residence hall) and suburban populations, proved the needlessness of separation according to ability, since they all achieved extraordinary success in a college-level assignment. I further proved that leading them through the challenges of contemporary education by means of familiar cultural expressions, such as weaving, is a powerful and successful tool. The public school students had no intellectual or aesthetic advantage over contract school students, contrary to public school beliefs in the superiority of their students. It would seem that, in essence, the greatest determiner of student success was teacher expectation; one-on-one instruction, the best dynamic.

Educating the Whole Person

I strongly believed in the transcendent potentials of my students, who, with a new-found belief in this themselves, attained a high level of musical achievement. The pressures these students faced were enormous. Many were trying to adapt to Western culture while attempting, consciously or subconsciously, to reject or retain their own identity or to deny the issue altogether. Very few models were being offered that would help them find a balance between the two.

Many Indian and non-Indian educators, administrators, and community members contend that assimilated and nontraditional Indian students are higher achievers capable of more advanced learning than those who adhere to a more traditional Indian lifestyle. This article demonstrates that such a conclusion is unwarranted with respect to music. To approach learning from and with a culture, and to be able to teach within that culture, would be of great benefit to all who wish to teach or work in a reservation setting. Unfortunately, this is not yet the view of many teachers of Indian students who still uphold a radical assimilationist philosophy. If a more holistic approach were stressed in teacher recruitment and proper support and nourishment were given to teachers when they arrive at reservation schools for their new teaching assignment, old-fashioned, blinkered views could be turned around and the present high turnover rate of teachers might even be reduced. A modicum of inter-cultural nurturing could benefit both teachers and students.

Teachers must be willing to transcend the limitations of their educational training in order to be successful in a multicultural setting. "Anyone attempting to teach children of another culture should be as fully aware as possible of the language, customs, traditions, and taboos of that culture so that he or she can avoid classroom and community misunderstandings and become an effective teacher (Mahan and Criger, in Reyhner 1992:95). The "weaving the fugue" project was successful because it utilized a multi-sensory approach which resonated with the students' primarily visual learning styles. "A style of teaching stressing overt verbal performance would be alien to a [Navajo] child" (Reyhner 1992:92). But in order to implement a multi-sensory approach the teacher must be capable of functioning in a multi-sensory manner. Teachers [must] consider all modes of instruction—visual, tactile, and kinesthetic—when teaching new concepts and skills, [and] multi-sensory approaches should be an important consideration for all instructional delivery" (Swisher, in Diaz 1992:81).

The poor academic performance of some Indian students has been attributed to the differences between children's learning methods outside and within the schools (Reyhner 1992: 81). Therefore, it is essential that teachers become aware of their students' communities in order to effectively determine the instructional styles best suited to them, while simultaneously integrating less familiar styles so that the students become globally competent. Merely insisting on conformity to old paradigms helps neither students nor teachers.

Teachers should try to grow while they are on Indian reservations. Many teachers who have had a long tenure on an Indian reservation limit the value of the experience by repeating the same lessons over and over again each succeeding year. The children deserve teachers who are willing to keep learning. Classes can be taken at Indian tribal colleges on the local culture or summer courses can be taken at colleges and universities that offer courses in bilingual and Indian education. And, again, teachers should become acquainted with the local elders and community people (Reyhner 1992: 109).

By metaphorically linking two seemingly disparate artistic expressions, Navajo weaving and eighteenth-century Baroque fugal composition, I have shown ways in which modern education and traditional philosophy and lifeways may be combined holistically, without separation or exclusion. That one was visual and the other aural made the experience more immediate and mutually reinforcing; successful educational and life experiences tend to be those which integrate the whole person. Cross-perceptual experiences such as hearing music in a weaving or seeing design in a piece of music are powerfully integrative, particularly when used in a cross-cultural setting. Furthermore, the application of the weaving metaphor to the fugue expands the experience and wonder not only of the mature student, but of everyone's appreciation of Western music. This meeting, which maintains cultural uniqueness, may be seen as an expansive and enriching experience for those in all groups.

When the students actually have an opportunity to create another culture's art form by learning to be more deeply perceptive of their own, the result is the successful bridging and integrating of the cultures within the individual and collective experience of the students. Music and visual art provided the way for my students to transcend feelings of cultural isolation and develop self-esteem and pride. They learned that to embrace one's unique identity is possible even in a world rapidly becoming less delineated by cultural boundaries. Most importantly, they learned that the Navajo rug is a cultural and artistic equivalent to the fugue, which provides, even today, cultural stability and continuity. The recognition that there exists within their culture something of equal or greater value than the European fugue, an idea shocking to those who hold for the superiority of Western culture, engenders the ability to view their own culture with increased clarity.

One answer to the question of Indian education has always been simple, yet has gone virtually unnoticed since the Federal government attempted to destroy "Indianness" through education from the 1800s to the present day: look towards specific ways to bridge Indian and other cultures rather than seek to emphasize one at the expense, great loss, or even death, of the other. Bridging, not separating, is the answer to many of the problems in contemporary Indian education. The willingness to experience new aspects of self must be encouraged of and desired by teachers in multicultural settings. Without this desire, instruction and understanding of the culture will be incomplete and therefore potentially destructive to the needs of the students.³

In her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Marilyn Ferguson writes about “transpersonal education.” This approach to education would most certainly be beneficial in all Native American (and other) educational systems. She states,

The name [transpersonal education] derives from a branch of psychology that focuses on the transcendent capacities of human beings. In transpersonal education, the learner is encouraged to be awake and autonomous, to question, to explore all the corners and crevices of conscious experience, to seek meaning, to test outer limits, to check out frontiers and depths of the self . . . [yet] because their structure itself tends to paralyze them, school systems have responded slowly, if at all, to new scientific findings related to the mind and changing values in society. If wholeness is health, the violence done to both meaning and self-image by most of our educational institutions is a major source of disease in our culture — a force that fragments even the child from a secure and loving home. . . . Transpersonal education aims to aid transcendence, not furnish mere coping skills (as with traditional American education). It is education’s counterpart to holistic medicine: education of the whole person. It emphasizes the continuum of knowledge, rather than “subjects,” and the common ground of human experience, transcending ethnic or national differences. It aids the learner’s search for meaning, the need to discern forms and patterns, the hunger for harmony. It deepens awareness of how a paradigm shifts, how frustration and struggle precede insights. Young minds are dampened and diminished every day in numbers too great to bear thinking about, forced through a system that stunts the capacity for a lifetime of growth. In contrast to insects, as someone said, human beings start out as butterflies and end up in cocoons. (Ferguson 1980:284-296).

Music and visual arts provided the way for my students to transcend the limitations of a system that denied the very fact that they were Indian. The students’ “tapestries of sound” entered the realm of the conscious, where sound became enmeshed with color, and traditional Navajo art became one with traditional European music. The students composed these pieces not only as gifted musicians, but as master weavers.

NOTES

1. Other primary problems of Indian youth include: separation and isolation, which reinforce a negative self-image; difficulty, at least in some communities, in bringing children in contact with Indian adult role models who can motivate them educationally; lack of preparation by teachers to understand and appreciate Indian children, their families, and their lifestyles; stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors evidenced by non-Indians, including teachers; ignorance on the part of educators as well as others regarding Indian traditions, values and achievements, resulting in a failure to respect Indian heritage and to include it in cross-cultural teaching (Dupris, 1979:69).

2. Tuba City High School and dormitories were originally operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A more modern building was built in the 1960's by the public school adjacent to the B.I.A. dormitories and classrooms. Because of an assimilationist policy, the Navajo regained control of the dormitories and B.I.A. school in 1986, although a state operated public system remained in effect *within* this system. Teachers were either hired by the public or the new contract (tribally operated) school, both with separate governing boards. I worked for the Navajo tribe in the contract school which replaced the B.I.A. Because public school teachers, who taught both dormitory and public students, were hired at higher salaries than contract teachers (who also taught both public and dormitory students), this situation was remedied in 1987 by equalizing salaries. Further deterioration of morale increased, however, primarily due to diverging educational philosophies between the public and contract schools. In essence, the public school philosophy made no mention of the fact that the student population was primarily Navajo, and that the school was located on an Indian reservation. The new contract school philosophy recognized the true identity of the students and location of the school, and supported the inclusion of Navajo and other Indian cultures into the curriculum. In 1989 the public school, unwilling to transform their educational philosophy to accommodate Indian students, declared a state of emergency and conducted classes in hastily placed trailers on the football field since the one building they controlled was not large enough for their student body. At the same time, the contract school, which had assumed control of the dormitories and B.I.A. classrooms, became Greyhills High School. This school still exists as of this writing, and Indian culture is finally recognized and taught amidst a core academic curriculum. The public school, having built new classrooms, continues to exist beside Greyhills High School. The split continues.

3. Of particular interest are the five stages of the transitional experience described by Adler in his article "The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock." I have explored this model as a useful tool for helping teachers on Indian reservations be more conscious, and therefore effective, in their roles as educators.

The transitional experience is, finally, a journey into the self. Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself. Such learning takes place when a person transcends the boundaries of ego, culture, and thinking . . . As interactions across barriers of human existence increase, and as the world comes closer to the physical realities of "the global village," new understandings of change experiences will hopefully broaden the challenges to ethnocentrism, chauvinism, and nationalism (Adler 1975:22).

See Appendix B for a summary of the transitional experience, and my educational model for multicultural and self literacy. For further information, see Banks 1994, Grof 1985 and Dabrowski 1979.

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APPENDIX A

A Student Fugue Composed Using the Metaphor of Navajo Rug Weaving

FUGUE IN B MINOR

Adagio ma non troppo
Inward, thoughtful

Lance Luther
May 1988

[illegible]

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21

26

31

36

41

f

p

p

p

mf

46

51

55

59

63

67

67 68 69

70

70 71 72 73

74

74 75 76 77

78

78 79 80 81 82

83

83 84 85 86

88

Measures 88-91 of a musical score in D major. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Treble, and Bass. Measures 88-91 show a melodic line in the upper Treble staff, a more active line in the middle Treble staff, and a steady bass line in the Bass staff. Measure 91 ends with a repeat sign.

92

Measures 92-95 of a musical score in D major. Measures 92-93 feature a melodic line in the upper Treble staff and a steady bass line. Measures 94-95 show a melodic line in the middle Treble staff and a steady bass line. Measure 95 ends with a repeat sign.

96

Measures 96-99 of a musical score in D major. Measures 96-97 show a melodic line in the upper Treble staff and a steady bass line. Measures 98-99 feature a melodic line in the middle Treble staff and a steady bass line. Measure 99 ends with a repeat sign.

100

Measures 100-103 of a musical score in D major. Measures 100-101 show a melodic line in the upper Treble staff and a steady bass line. Measures 102-103 feature a melodic line in the middle Treble staff and a steady bass line. Measure 103 ends with a repeat sign.

APPENDIX B

Four Basic Tenets of the Transitional Experience

1. In situations of psychological, social, or cultural tension, each person is forced into redefinition of some level of his or her existence.
2. Every person experiences the world through his or her own culturally influenced values, assumptions, and beliefs.
3. Most individuals are relatively unaware of their own values, beliefs, and attitudes. Transitional experiences, in which the individual moves from one environment or experience into another, tend to bring cultural predispositions into perception and conflict.
4. Psychological movements into new dimensions of perception and new environments of experience tend to produce forms of personality disintegration. *Disintegration is the basis for developmental thrusts upward, the creation of new evolutionary dynamics, and the movement of personality to a higher level. The reorientation of personality at higher levels of consciousness and psychic integration is based upon the disintegrative aspects of personality inherent in the conflict and confusion of movement and change experiences.*

(Compiled from Adler 1975:14-15, author's italics).

Five Stages of the Transitional Experience

1. *Contact*. The individual views the new environment from the insularity of his or her own ethnocentrism, [and] is far more attuned to similarities than differences. The individual is insulated by his or her own culture. Differences as well as similarities provide rationalization for continuing confirmation of status, role, and identity.
2. *Disintegration*. Marked by a period of confusion and disorientation. Differences become increasingly noticeable as different behaviors, values, and attitudes intrude into the perceptual reality of the sojourner. Cultural differences begin to intrude. Growing awareness of being different leads to loss of self-esteem. Individual experiences loss of cultural support ties and misreads new cultural cues.
3. *Reintegration*. Characterized by strong rejection of the second culture. Cultural similarities and differences are rejected through stereotyping, generalization, evaluation, and judgmental behavior and attitude. The individual is hostile to that which is experienced but not understood in terms of his or her vocabulary of experiences. Rejection of second culture causes preoccupation with likes and dislikes; differences are projected. Negative behavior, however, is a form of self-assertion and growing self-esteem.
4. *Autonomy*. Marked by rising sensitivity and by the acquisition of both skill and understanding of the second culture. The individual is a fully functioning person in his or her role and is both comfortable and secure with his or her status as an insider outsider in two different cultures. The individual is so-

cially and linguistically capable of negotiating most new and different situations: he or she is assured of ability to survive new experiences.

5. *Independence*. The final stage of the transition is marked by attitudes, emotionality, and behaviors that are *independent* but not *undependent* of cultural influence. Where an individual is independent, he or she is capable of experiential learning that is holistically incorporated into identity, while at the same time capable of again having preconceptions, assumptions, values, and attitudes challenged. Social, psychological, and cultural differences are accepted and enjoyed. The individual is capable of exercising choice and responsibility and able to *create* meaning for situations.

(Compiled from Adler 1975:17-19).

A New Educational Model for Multicultural and Self-Literacy

1. Learning to learn includes learning to see the relationships between things. The importance of synthesis—the process of pulling things together, should be stressed. This is possible only if there is a deep sense of context (Ferguson 1980:303).
2. The use of a “synectics” approach is important, where learning is based on making connections that relate the new to the familiar (Ferguson 1980:304-305).
3. Teacher’s must beware of creating a “Pygmalion Effect” in which they unintentionally (or intentionally) communicate their expectations of what a student can do. Those students expected to do well usually thrive, *even if the teacher’s expectations are based on bogus information*. Teachers who give little *negative* feedback to students of whom they expect little make it difficult for the students to correct what they’re doing wrong. Teachers must be aware of biases regarding sex, race, and physical attractiveness of their students (Ferguson 1980:309).
4. Attempting to meet the criteria for “higher sanity” (Grof 1985:401) must be a consistent goal for all teachers in multicultural studies.
5. Teachers must develop a refined ability for perceiving interrelated wholes and interconnectedness between their primary subject area and the culture(s) they will be instructing.
6. Teachers must fully understand the difference between assimilation and acculturation, and must be aware of unconscious projections of inner fears and prejudices.
7. Teachers must support the ideology that ethnic diversity is a positive element in the classroom.
8. Teachers must be aware of the perpetuation of stereotypes through the false assumption that non-Western cultures are static with unchanging lifestyles. Cultures are dynamic, complex, and changing (Banks 1994:84).
9. The teacher must have democratic attitudes and values, a clarified pluralistic ideology, a process conceptualization of ethnic studies, the ability to view society from diverse ethnic perspectives and points of view, knowledge of the complex nature of ethnicity in Western societies, and the ability to func-

tion (at least) at a level of biethnicity. Reformed teacher-education programs should be designed to help teachers acquire these attitudes, conceptual frameworks, knowledge, and skills (Banks 1994:251).

10. Teachers must be aware of the rewards as well as problems of cross-cultural functioning in order to develop the ability for interpreting their cross-cultural experiences accurately and to benefit more from them (Banks 1994:255).

11. Teachers who view cultural differences as strengths are able to create the type of atmosphere that motivates learning (Reyhner 1992:91).

12. Teachers in multicultural classrooms need to employ a wide array of teaching methods reflective of the variety of learning styles found among their students (Diaz 1992:9).

13. When the educators fail to inform students about specific cultural groups, they convey a picture of marginality about those groups in society (Diaz 1992:14).

14. Teachers must be encouraged to develop skills that are relational and cooperative as well as factual and analytical, as well as internalize the notion that the educational product is much more significant than the educational process (Diaz 1992:20).

15. Field-sensitive teaching approaches, which capitalize on human associations, correspond much more closely with the learning preferences of many students. This is especially true for minority students (Diaz 1992:15).

16. Teachers must believe that all students can learn, regardless of their social-class or ethnic group (Diaz 1992:24).

17. Teachers must have as a goal global education, which helps students develop cross-cultural competency in cultures beyond our national boundaries and acquire insights needed to recognize that all peoples living on Earth have interconnected fates (Diaz 1992:25).

18. Teachers must believe in the inherent worth of transitional experiences as the source of higher levels of personality development (Adler 1975:14).

19. Teachers must be aware of techniques that help them consciously move through the different stages of transitional experience/culture shock. They must understand that the difficulties inherent in navigating these stages are temporary if they have a willingness to fully experience and thereby integrate the emerging psychic material.

20. Holotropic Breathwork, a psychotherapeutic method developed by Stanislav Grof, M.D., blends Eastern philosophy/psychology, traditional Western psychology, transpersonal psychology, music, and art. It is by far the most powerful and effective modality for experiencing and integrating material emerging as a result of transitional experience. Although challenging, moving through the five stages of the transitional experience provides the potential for greater personal and collective awareness, maturity, and multicultural functioning.

(From Cook, *A Philosophy of Multicultural Consciousness in Education*, unpublished paper).