

# Intercultural Art Music and the Sensory Veracity of Reconciliation: Brent Michael Davids' *Powwow Symphony* on the Dakota Music Tour

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*Abstract:* This article questions music's particular stake in Indigenous initiatives of redress and reconciliation. It examines music's media-specific relationship with redress and reconciliation, and public discourses that situate intercultural art music performance as a medium of reconciliation. In addressing intercultural art music's abilities to engender reconciliation, the article considers its social and political efficacy from two perspectives. Firstly, it offers a brief survey of the public and academic discourses on music's ability to engender reconciliation. Secondly, it examines how the discourse of music's power for reconciliation played out in an a performance of Mohican composer Brent Michael Davids' *Powwow Symphony* presented as part of the Dakota Music Tour (2010) in Minnesota.

*Résumé :* Cet article s'interroge sur l'enjeu particulier de la musique dans les initiatives autochtones de réparation et réconciliation. L'article examine les relations entre le médium spécifique de la musique et la réparation et la réconciliation, ainsi que les discours publics qui présentent les concerts de musique artistique interculturelle comme autant de moyens de réconciliation. Pour évaluer les capacités de la performance de musique artistique interculturelle à engendrer la réconciliation, l'article considère son efficacité sociale et politique sous deux angles. En premier lieu, il propose une brève étude des discours publics et universitaires sur la capacité de la musique à engendrer la réconciliation. Dans un deuxième temps, il examine comment le discours sur le pouvoir de réconciliation de la musique s'est joué dans le cadre d'une interprétation de la *Powwow Symphony* du compositeur mohican Brent Michael Davids donnée dans le cadre du Dakota Music Tour en 2010 dans le Minnesota.

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Settler state apologies for colonial injustices toward First Peoples across the globe have carried profound effects, both negative and positive.<sup>1</sup>

Describing the negative effects in viral terms, playwright Wole Soyinka sees the spread of reconciliation as a global “fever of atonement” (1999:90). A recurring symptom of this fever has been the proliferation of rhetoric emphasizing the state’s ability to move beyond this “sad chapter” of its history. The containment of state injustices as a discrete chapter of history abdicates the continuing responsibility of the state and its citizens toward addressing the ongoing internal colonization, racism, and human rights violations faced by Indigenous peoples. In contrast, the positive effects of state apology have included the exposure of systemic, state-sponsored atrocities that were once hidden or invisible. Yet even this new visibility is not without contradictions, since it is often at the level of visibility that the work of the state stalls.

While gestures of reconciliation by political leaders have given global visibility to histories of injustice, critics have questioned the efficacy of such performance, and have asserted the need for further action in pursuit of restorative justice. For restorative justice to take place, reparations must be made and actions must be taken that demonstrate more than the mere visibility of state apology. It is here that the work of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) begins. TRCs take part in effecting the *sensus communis* of state injustices by holding public hearings; disseminating their findings through print, online, and broadcast media; advocating for revisions to educational curricula; and sponsoring both large and small public and community events where cultural and artistic presentations take place. Such cultural and artistic events seek to shape the public discourse on the history of the nation state.

For some survivors of trauma who give testimony at Truth Commissions, the truth also needs to find mediated expression so as to avoid re-traumatization. Arts practices can provide survivors with a symbolic and sensory means by which to address their experiences of trauma – experiences that may, until the moment of testimony, exist as liminal internal accounts, on the cusp between the sayable and unsayable. In his 1998 Foreword to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report of South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu quoted the last lines of Emily Dickinson’s Poem 1129: “The Truth must dazzle gradually/Or every man be blind” (Vendler 1998:431-33). Tutu uses Dickinson’s poem to emphasize how, in order for both survivors and the public to avoid its blinding brightness, the truth must be told “at a slant” and experienced through “explanations kind” (that is, the representation of truths rather than the glaring light of truths themselves). The enigma of aesthetic form here makes the arts an apposite, and sometimes preferable, means to convey traumatic experience. And yet, in contrast to the idea that truth must “dazzle gradually” or be made manageable, we might also consider how a significant challenge for the arts of reconciliation is to render truth as

more than *merely* “explanations kind,” that is, as more than mere representation that makes visible but does not necessarily jar us into a space of ethical encounter. While some critics of the role of artistic practices in redress argue that the aestheticization of colonial and present-day injustices can enact a kind of sanitization of trauma and political issues (LaCapra 1994; LaCapra 2001; Gómez-Peña 2001), proponents affirm the capacity of the arts to reach audiences who might not otherwise engage with such histories, and even incite them to action (Dolan 2005).

The debate on the social and political efficacy of artistic practice provides a starting point to question the stake of music in Indigenous initiatives of redress and reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> For this article I focus on music's relationship with such initiatives in light of public discourses that champion intercultural art music as the quintessential medium of reconciliation. In addressing intercultural art music's purported ability to engender reconciliation, I consider how public discourses invest such music with social and political efficacy in three examples. First, I examine a concert review and subsequent donations campaign letter by Soundstreams, a new music organization based in Toronto, Canada. Second, I look at the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, and bring some of the recent critical literature on its activities into dialogue with ideas about how music's structural and formal properties articulate a politics of their own. Third, I examine how Mohican composer Brent Michael Davids' *Powwow Symphony* (1998), a work presented as part of the Dakota Music Tour, took part in a reconciliation initiative aimed at addressing the largest mass hanging in American history of thirty-eight Dakota warriors. In addition to Davids' *Powwow Symphony*, the Dakota Music Tour presented a number of works by Davids for orchestra and Native American musicians as it travelled to the Upper and Lower Sioux reservations and the Eighth Annual Great Dakota Gathering and Homecoming held at Unity Park in Winona, Minnesota in 2011. In my examination of the Dakota Music Tour I draw on two interviews, one with Davids and one with a Dakota audience member who attended the performance. These two interviews gesture toward the contrasting positions taken up in the larger debate of music's social and political potential to bring about redress.

### Art Music's Discourse of Intercultural Unity

It is striking how frequently interactions between musicians of different cultures in art music are referred to by terms such as unity, harmony and “understanding” in performance reviews and music marketing. A good example is the review of a

concert by the Canadian ensemble Soundstreams, and the fundraising letter that drew upon this review. William Littler's "Music Bridges the World's Differences" in *The Toronto Star* reviewed a 2010 Soundstreams concert featuring the Mexican percussion group Tambuco. "Music and musicians can heal the social fabric of the world," Littler wrote, quoting Tambuco's artistic director, Ricardo Gallardo. "People are suspicious of the unknown," Gallardo said, "but musicians are people who can lessen those suspicions and heal social tissue. The magic word for us is collaboration. We learn to work and live together by crossing borders." In its programming, the Soundstreams' concert was indeed a collaborative venture, featuring several Canadian, South American, and Mexican compositions, including a new commission by the Canadian-Argentinean composer Analia Lugdar. Mexico's Tambuco percussion ensemble was joined by four Canadian singers, which made for a cross-cultural approach both in terms of repertoire and the musicians and performers involved. From Littler's and Gallardo's rhetoric, however, we are led to believe that this cross-cultural collaboration will "lessen suspicions" of "unknown" cultural difference and "heal" social wounds. While it is reasonable to assume that collaboration between musicians of different cultural backgrounds often entails a process of sharing and negotiation that may indeed lessen the suspicion of cultural difference for musicians and audiences alike, it is important to ask precisely *what* particular methods of collaboration enact a crossing of borders in the first place and *how* such border crossings effect the everyday lived encounters of those musicians who take part in performance or those audience members who witness the performance. Moreover, to what extent does the politics of aesthetics expressed by intercultural music itself impact democratic expression in the public sphere?

In the precarious context of declining support for the arts in universities, public education, and in civic life, the rhetoric of music's power has gained increasing value. Neoliberal views on the expendability of the arts have resulted in the cultivation of a counter-discourse employed by artists to validate the arts by foregrounding their social efficacy.<sup>3</sup> Soundstreams' donations campaign shortly after the concert echoed this counter-discourse. In bold print, the letter describes how the ensemble's programming "crosses borders" and "ignites the power of music to change the world." It appeals to potential donors to support not just Soundstreams, but to "support the power of music." Of course solicitation letters have their own language, one largely defined by superlatives. And yet, despite the fact that the Soundstreams letter was written in order to raise monies, it is telling that its appeal is grounded in the socially efficacious language of intercultural unity. Intercultural harmony, in both senses, is something Canadian concertgoers are willing to "buy into." In doing so, audiences subscribe (literally) to the belief that music has the power to effect change in the world. Music locates

its power through the affective experiences we have with it. Such affectively charged moments shared by audiences and performers strengthen their belief and hope in the messages associated with the musical event. In lending its power to concepts like democracy or the healing of social wounds, music can be said to exert its rhetorical powers of persuasion to effect the discourse with which it associates.

The rhetoric of music's ability to heal wounds and cross borders also pervades the discourse surrounding Daniel Barenboim's and Edward Said's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. Of the Israeli and Arab musicians who play together in the orchestra, Barenboim has said, "there is automatically a common terrain on the music, because in front of a Beethoven symphony they [the musicians] are all equals. In real life they are not" (2006). Extending the metaphor of a universally shared territory of music, Barenboim has also described the Divan as a "Sovereign Independent Republic" (2008:182). The orchestra should be granted its due worth for bringing Israeli and Arab musicians together as collaborators in a common cause, and as interlocutors learning to speak to each other. However, as Rachel Beckles Willson and Solveig Riiser have cogently argued, such claims over-extend the conflict-erasing power of symphonic music-making. Barenboim and Said ignore both the explicit material hierarchies within orchestras and the formal hierarchies within music works. One might, for example, question how the orchestral hierarchies embodied by the conductor and concertmaster through to the ranks of first chair, second desk positions, and the attendant privileges that come with such positions, affect the relationships between musicians. Similarly, one might question how the interaction between different cultural worldviews is expressed through the structure, genre, and formal elements of particular musical works and performances. A formalist analysis demonstrates how the *structural* languages of encounter in intercultural art music express certain operations of reconciliation (such as negotiation, dialogue) or, alternatively, maintain hegemonic positions. That is, we might understand how social and political relations between cultures might similarly be reflected within the structural and formal musical relationships of particular musical works – a politics of the aesthetic.<sup>4</sup>

Edward Said, who co-founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, took Baroque counterpoint as a model for both his methodology of "contrapuntal criticism" (Radhakrishnan 2012:23-28) and for dialogue between the voices of Israeli and Palestinian musicians of the orchestra. Counterpoint, from the Latin *punctus contra punctum*, translates as "point against point" or "note against note," and refers to the movement of musical voices against each other. In contrapuntal writing each voice must be fully realized on its own and able to stand independently while all voices are considered of equal importance and no voice

dominates, except temporarily. While Said's metaphor informed the musical utopia envisioned for the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra as a space of vocal equality,<sup>5</sup> the music played by the orchestra actually diverges greatly from this style. As musicologist Rachel Beckles Willson has noted, although Said proposed that "music with counterpoint could be a model for post-imperialist thought... because it allowed for the coexistence of different voices without coercing a synthesis between them...the Romantic symphonic repertoire of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra may be incommensurate with such 'counterpoint' because it drives towards synthetic resolution" (2009a:320). Without offering a comprehensive history of structural homology within musicology and the debates surrounding its tendency toward the reification of musical meaning,<sup>6</sup> it is worth pausing here to reflect on how the ideologies of musical teleology (or goal-oriented progression) have been critiqued from feminist (McClary 2002) and postcolonial frameworks (Taylor 2007). Such perspectives show how sonata-allegro form establishes a system wherein a home key and theme, encounters secondary "other" themes, and where "finally, by the recapitulation the second theme must now conform to the first theme's tonic key area. It is absorbed, its threat to the opening key's identity is neutralized" (McClary 2002:69). These narrative readings see repertoire from the classical and romantic eras, like the Beethoven symphonies performed by the West-Eastern Divan, as enacting homologies of oppression and colonization, homologies that would seem to be at structural odds with Said's ideal of democratic contrapuntal dialogue. Indeed, while being "in front of Beethoven" might be understood as a reference to the Ninth symphony and Schiller's "Ode to Joy," a hymn to the unity and freedom of humanity, the sublation of orchestral members' cultural differences "in front of Beethoven" can equally be read as musical subjugation.<sup>7</sup>

I offer these two examples of Soundstreams and West-Eastern Divan Orchestra to show the discursive context – wherein the mere bringing together of different cultural perspectives is granted a significant measure of democratic efficacy – within which intercultural art music performed by First Peoples and created by non-Indigenous composers takes place. Within this context, I'd like to question the degree to which such intercultural music is experienced as a symbolic form of reconciliation regardless of the degree to which collaboration has occurred or questions of cultural difference are broached. I will argue that the audience's experience of reconciliation takes place through their affective encounter with music. Whereas emotions and feelings involve sensory interpretation (Labanyi 2010:224), affect is pre-cognitive, a form of thinking done by the body.<sup>8</sup> Thus I speculate that a kind of "reconciliatory affect" occurs *before* audience members interpret the experience they eventually identify as "reconciliation." Physiological responses (e.g., tears, a desire to rise to one's feet

and applaud, experiencing an “indescribable” hopefulness) are followed by the interpretation of such responses as appropriate to a witnessing of “reconciliation.” From such immediate physiological responses, it might seem to audience members as if intercultural music were the very substance of unity itself.

It is perhaps not surprising that in this “age of apology” (Gibney et al. 2007; Wakeham 2012), intercultural performance featuring Indigenous artists, non-Indigenous composers, and art music ensembles has also seen striking growth and taken on a greater degree of significance for creators and audiences alike. From its employment as a statement of Indigenous solidarity with the nation-state in the Vancouver, Sydney, and Salt Lake City Olympic ceremonies, to its central role in Canada’s current Truth and Reconciliation Commission national events, intercultural performance has taken centre stage in efforts to redress histories of colonial practice and ongoing forms of internal colonization. The past decade alone has seen operas, orchestral works, and numerous chamber works written by First Peoples in which their cultural practices are celebrated. Many works by Indigenous composers have taken on that task of redressing historical injustices toward First Peoples. These include Odawa composer Barbara Croall’s music theatre work *Bigiiwe* (2007), about her mother’s residential school experience, and Mohican composer Brent Michael Davids’ forthcoming opera, *The Purchase of Manhattan*, based on the 1626 “purchase” of Manhattan Island from the Lenape for sixty Dutch guilders. Such projects play a significant role in historical redress by educating audiences about colonial injustices that are insufficiently present in the national consciousness. Yet even during intercultural performance that does not explicitly redress a contemporary or historical injustice, audience members may experience a strong affective response. Observing audience response to numerous Indigenous intercultural works, I have witnessed both tears and ecstatic support from audiences who, without fail, stood in ovation at each performance.<sup>9</sup> In the context of contemporary art music performances where standing ovations are more the exception than the norm, this behaviour is even more noteworthy. There are of course numerous reasons for giving standing ovations. Baz Kershaw identifies one of these as the consumer’s justification for the purchase of expensive theatre tickets: “The standing ovation becomes an orgasm of self-congratulation for money so brilliantly spent” (2001:144). Standing ovations may also be motivated by pressure to conform to other audience members who stand; or they may be motivated by community, familial, or fanatical affiliation with the performer(s). Drawing on Henle’s *Anthropologische Vorträge* of 1876-80, William James has even suggested that the action of clapping is a “symbolic abridgement of an embrace” (1890:481). By extension, might we understand the standing ovation symbolically to abridge a more active desire to embrace, a moving forward to extend welcome, a gesture

of reconciliation itself? Whatever the irreducibly multiple reasons for ovations, audience members' responses act as an index of intercultural music-making's reconciliatory affect. As audience members experience immediate and powerful physiological responses to something "beyond the music itself" their belief in witnessing reconciliation is given sensory veracity.

Certainly, "reconciliation" is what everyone wants to hear, but is it also what everyone wants to feel? "With its connotations of peacemaking and of the setting aside of differences," writes Keavy Martin, "'reconciliation' has become a kind of chant or chorus – an anthem to Canadian identity and ideals" (2009:52). Martin's metaphor can be taken quite literally, to speculate that intercultural music performances have begun to act as sites where audiences experience "reconciliation" as affective response. Audience members who understand the interaction of different cultural practices as a form of reconciliation are aided by the rhetorical circulation of the efficacy of music as a harbinger of peace and community. Drawing upon Lawrence Kramer's concept of the "stickyness" of constructive description, we can understand the public discourse of intercultural music as "'description without place' (i.e. without a literal referent) [that] endows its object with meanings that return to it from the object in a new form" (2010:52). The discourse of intercultural music's healing power and ability to reconcile constructs the object it describes. Yet to describe intercultural music purely in terms of the rhetorical power that constructive description exerts upon our experience of the music occludes the very real sensory impact of musical affect. In the forms of vocal expression Martin outlines – the chant of political activism, the *communitas* of choral singing, the patriotic belonging felt in singing a national anthem – the vibrational force of sound moves across and into the bodies of performers and audience members alike. They are united in a "sensate democracy" (Butler & Spivak 2007:62), a consensus largely imagined (and refracted through constructive description), but also felt, as reconciliation.

### Reconciliation's Visibility:

#### *Powwow Symphony* on the Dakota Music Tour

Even in Indigenous intercultural work that does *not* explicitly redress the injustices faced by First Peoples, audiences may experience a performance of such work as a symbolic form of reconciliation. Brent Michael Davids' *Powwow Symphony*, a work that does not itself seek to address historical injustice toward First Peoples, provides a useful example of how music takes part in Indigenous initiatives of redress. In the Dakota Music Tour, Brent Michael Davids' *Powwow Symphony* was performed as part of a commemoration project designed to inform



communities across Minnesota about the Dakota-American war of 1862, in which thirty-eight Native Dakota men were hanged. While Davids has described the Dakota Music Tour as a way to incite audiences to talk about this marginalized piece of American history, some audience members remained skeptical that this discussion served the larger Dakota agenda of restorative justice.

Written in 2002, and subtitled "A Day in the Life of a Powwow," *Powwow Symphony* re-imagines the site and sounds of concert protocol by presenting a powwow in symphonic form with fifteen movements. Just as one hears the Master of Ceremonies (MC) at a powwow, in Davids' symphony, a powwow MC is the soloist who announces the order of dances, provides information about the attractions and vendors on the meeting grounds, provides entertaining commentary, and supports and encourages the dancers. In place of the traditional powwow songs performed by the Drum, the orchestra provides the accompaniment for the dances which include a Grand Entry, a Flag Song, Contest Song, and even a Tiny Tot Dance. Rather than simply referring to these dances in an abstract sense through the music, the symphony requires dancers from each category to occupy and fill the concert hall's aisles as they perform. The MC's announcements and powwow dancing fit Davids' description of the *Powwow Symphony* as "a symphonic powwow brought into the concert hall." The understated and dexterous wit of the powwow MC here replaces the traditional musical virtuosity of the soloist. But while the violinist's arpeggios establish a distance between the performer and audience through the soloist's exceptional virtuosity, the MC closes the gap between spectator and stage through intimacy and humour. He develops a relationship with the audience when he states: "Uh-oh, I just received word that we have a child who momentarily cannot find his parents. So go look by the fry-bread stand for junior, and while you're over there maybe you can pick me up another piece of fry-bread – tell 'em it's for that handsome guy on the microphone."

Davids' aims, to bring a powwow into the concert hall and adapt the powwow using a symphonic treatment, are unique in relation to the historical prevalence of non-Native composers who have sought to import Indigenous songs and melodies into their symphonies. The performances by the powwow MC and dancers destabilize the conventions of concert hall decorum and art music. While the understated humour of powwow MC subverts the technical virtuosity of the concert soloist, the powwow dancing in the concert hall's aisles displaces the normative rules that govern how bodies might occupy the spaces of the concert hall.

Yet what changes when powwow traditions are aestheticized on the concert stage, separated from the peripatetic experience of audience-participants on powwow meeting grounds? To what extent do audiences understand the essential

community interaction of powwows when each piece is presented in concert, and when audience members are immobile, engaged more in contemplation than physical participation? Powwow experience is not just the music and dance that occurs upon the sacred ground of the powwow arena. The interactions both inside and outside the meeting grounds between dancers, judges, vendors, the MC and the audience (who may also participate as dancers), all are intrinsic to the material sensory experience of powwows. As Davids noted, in a typical powwow, “you don’t even know who is a performer and audience at some points... somebody might be dancing or singing and then they’re sitting next to you and eating a piece of fry-bread and chatting” (interview, 19 October 2011). Powwow is also a celebration and affirmation of the strength of Indigenous communities through the relationships and dialogue that take place upon the meeting grounds. In the concert performance, then, David’s *Powwow Symphony* might also be understood as a highly reified version of powwow, focused more on presentation than on interaction. The full sensory engagement of audience-participants in powwow experience – eating fry-bread, walking between vendors, joking with friends, the hopeful anticipation of dance competition – remain absent for audience members in Davids’ symphony. This is most notable when Davids’ MC announces, “Ok, it’s time for our first intertribal dance, and that means everybody dances!” to which the audience, largely unfamiliar with powwow traditions, has consistently remained in their seats.<sup>10</sup> Such was the case even when the work was presented in a park setting, at Unity Park in Minnesota, a site at which powwows are often held. Many reasons might be given for the reluctance of Native American and non-Native audience members to join in such dancing.<sup>11</sup> Chief among these is that for any audience member, even one familiar with powwow dance, it would take a great deal of courage to violate concert protocol by leaving one’s seat in a formal setting like a concert hall, especially if other audience members did not. However, since many of the Dakota Music Tour’s presentations took place in unconventional spaces like school auditoriums and a park, it is notable that Davids’ work as a “powwow in symphonic form” remained within the conventions of art music engagement. The invitation to dance issued by Davids’ MC finds its significance not in the audience’s rejection to take up their role as partner in an intercultural “choreologue,” but instead through Davids’ lack of provision for the audience member to take up the audience-participant role fundamental to powwow experience. If Davids’ call to join together in intertribal dance is purely notional (“everybody dances” as a call without response, and thus emphasizing the representation of the call over the call itself), then there is perhaps a similar visibility to *Powwow Symphony* as there is to state apology – a form of reconciliation made visible, but lacking adequate provision for action.<sup>12</sup>

As part of the Dakota Music Tour, Davids' intent for the *Powwow Symphony* was to attract a non-Native public to engage in the discussions about Dakota's history of colonial injustice. In Davids' words, the tour:

was designed as a way for Dakota people to have a voice. Minnesota was founded on genocide. No one wants to go back and look at it, but they are ignoring the Dakota people if they won't. The music brings people to the event, but the healing comes from the dialogue that happens, kind of like the Mary Poppins saying, "A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down." Our concert is the sugar. (2010)

Music here acts as the social lubricant, and has the potential to get people discussing events that they might not otherwise feel comfortable discussing. As a "spoonful of sugar," the concert takes part in a long history of enticing "hooks" embedded within First Peoples' literary and artistic practices. In the work of Thomas King and Kent Monkman, for example, the reader or viewer is captivated by the dexterity of rhetorical and representational technique. King's "interfusal literature" (King 1997) uses humour and direct address to lure the reader close, only then to reveal the trick – a sharp turn to acknowledge historical injustice or contemporary racism in which the reader is implicated through her relationship to the narrator. Monkman's paintings depict idyllic Canadian landscapes in the style of nineteenth-century painters like Cornelius Krieghoff which from a distance look exactly like the original paintings, but upon closer inspection show the explorer and settler figures in seductive encounters with Miss Chief Eagle Testicle, Monkman's alter ego. King and Monkman's sophisticated use of "bait and hook" techniques employ the same seductiveness Davids intends with the *Powwow Symphony's* "spoonful of sugar."

But to what extent does the sugar of the *Powwow Symphony* help the medicine of historical injustice go down? Do audiences become intoxicated by the music's melliflence? Or is the music too saccharine for the political project of historical redress? Here comments from the Dakota Indian history scholar Waziataywin are of special interest; as a member of the Dakota community, Waziataywin has long been involved in political activism and restorative justice initiatives for the Dakota people. Waziataywin and her family attended the Dakota Music Tour performance at the Prairies Edge Casino in Granite Falls, Minnesota. She described her experience of the concert as

making a very difficult subject in Dakota history... making it seem as though we're all prepared to move beyond it... [Davids]

would make reference to the significance of bringing the Mankato Symphony together with the Maze Kute drum group, so he alluded to the significance but never explained it...and “Look, isn’t this a wonderful collaboration between the Dakota people *and* people in Mankato?” but he never talked about the history, he never talked about the brutality, he never talked about Minnesota’s policy of genocide or ethnic cleansing, about the bounties placed on Dakota scalps.... We are still denied our homeland... and white Minnesotans are still benefiting from our disposition, are still benefiting from the theft of our lands and violation of our treaties, and it’s not over, we’re engaged in a struggle for our lives and a struggle for our survival against an illegal occupation. (Interview, 11 November 2011)

For Waziataywin, the tour was too much about the appearance of reconciliation without the substance of redress. Speaking about the powwow dancers, which included her niece, she said:

I felt a sense of anger that Dakota people become co-opted in this process, we become complicit in this form of entertainment for white people because I really didn’t feel like the performance was gauged toward Dakota people.... I felt like it was targeted toward a white audience.... I would say that there were more white people in the audience than Dakota people, and I would say ninety-five percent of the people who were there left before the [post-show] discussion.... The vast majority of the people left after the performance. (Ibid.)

From Waziataywin’s account it would seem that few audience members cared to remain after the concert, at least at this event, for the “medicinal truth” in Davids’ musical reconciliation. If, as I have argued, intercultural art music between Indigenous and non-Indigenous creators effects a sensory veracity through reconciliatory affect – that it is, in and of itself, a sensed truth of reconciliation – then perhaps it might also be said that audience members experience this sensory veracity as self-complete. The experience of historical redress intended to take place through post-show audience dialogue with experts on Dakota’s colonial history was obsolesced by the self-complete affective reconciliation experienced by audience members in the concert itself.

The substitution of symbolic experience for dialogic action is further supported by arts reviewer Allison Herrera’s response to the concert: “what

the organizers of this concert are trying to do is healing through making music together. Creating music together *is* having a dialogue, it *is* saying you don't have to be afraid of history, we can talk about the tragic events that happened in 1862" (2011; emphasis in original). In Herrera's statement we again encounter the rhetoric that posits musical performance as unity itself – "creating music together *is* having a dialogue." And perhaps some audience members did feel, as the saying goes, that the music "spoke to them." Yet the metaphor of music as dialogue and actually engaging in dialogue are two different things, and their conflation effectively substitutes one for the other. Of course, to measure the extent and efficacy of such dialogue requires close attention to how incremental change occurs over time in communities and individuals. No one work is effective, but a succession of works begin to model different social relations. This is not to say that we should not study individual works, but that perhaps we cannot judge their impact as isolated events.<sup>13</sup>

While we may celebrate the vitality of Indigenous cultural practices and ensure that we not dismiss the potential of dialogue, learning, and trust that can be built through intercultural music collaboration, we must also remain attentive to music's basic affective power. The *feeling* that something has been achieved positions such intercultural music performance as symbolic reconciliation and something more. Indeed, as much as the very "power of music" might have a range of benefits, it might just as well convince its audiences, that, like Austin's "performative utterance" (1962), the experiencing of such performance *is* the doing of reconciliation itself.

In witnessing wide varieties of intercultural work between Canadian art music ensembles and Indigenous musicians myself, I am left with the question as to whether the very power of intercultural music – through its celebratory register and the discourse that surrounds its performance – leaves any room for the listener to feel distance between that which they have witnessed, and the partial glimpse of reconciliation that such events gesture toward. Does intercultural music's reconciliatory affect allow for witnesses' over-identification with the narrative of the survivor or victim? Do intercultural performances convince listeners that reconciliation has been achieved, or that "we" comprehend the complexity of the issues placed before us? Such questions may verge on the Platonic notion of music's ability to incite immoral thoughts and actions, that listeners have limited agency in their response. And yet we must also grant that along with its healing abilities, its role in rising political action (in chants and songs at political rallies) and its use in response to atrocities of war and crimes, musical affect also has the power to conflate hope for the future with the reality of the present.

Davids' *Powwow Symphony*, like much Indigenous intercultural music, has

immense potential to bring together First Peoples, non-Native creators, and their audiences in dialogue to rethink the ways by which different worldviews might cohabit the same territory. Yet as critics of Canada's current Truth and Reconciliation Commission have emphasized, despite the significant benefits resulting from the TRC's various activities (including community hearings and public education on the history and impact of the residential schools upon First Peoples), they may have the unintentional effect of shifting public attention away from political struggles of redress toward a conclusiveness implied by processes of reconciliation.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding composers' and arts organizations' best intentions to foster reconciliation through intercultural performance initiatives, it is important not to take the fact of such initiatives' existence as proof of their efficacy. We must continue to develop a breadth of methodologies by which to analyze how such work is efficacious, the range and depth of efficacy, and for whom such initiatives have efficacy. In doing this, we must remain open to the possibility that some intercultural performance might inadvertently privilege the aesthetic aspects of reconciliation – visibility in lieu of participation and action – over the substantive forms of change First Peoples continue to demand.



## Notes

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1. 2008 saw both the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper offer apologies to the Indigenous peoples for taking their children from their families and placing them in the care of non-Indigenous families and schools where they suffered physical, psychological and sexual abuses. The United States made a more inconspicuous apology to Native Americans on the National Day of Prayer on May 6, 2004. On this date a joint resolution of apology was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Sam Brownback (now governor of Kansas). This resolution was passed in 2009 and acknowledged the harm done to Native Peoples by the unlawful acquisition of tribal land and theft of tribal resources and assets by officials of the United States government. Despite mounting pressure from Native American communities, and several community-led initiatives across the country, the U.S. government has yet to make a public apology of national scope, or to launch an official commission to examine historical injustices.

2. By "reconciliation," I mean the ways by which two opposing groups or individuals come to "restore relations; to bring into agreement and establish peaceful co-existence" (Scott 2010: 206). By "redress," I refer to an action that attempts to

set right, or make amends for wrongdoing. Historical and artistic forms of redress, would, for instance, involve educating the public about marginalized or hidden injustices on the part of the nation state. Redress by way of intercultural performance would similarly involve addressing historical injustices or social and political issues faced by First Peoples today.

3. In a controversial Toronto *Sun News* video interview with celebrated Canadian dancer Margie Gillis on June 1, 2011, news anchor Krista Erickson aggressively questioned how Gillis's work in "interpretive dance" [sic] was a good use of taxpayers' dollars. In response, Gillis reminded Erikson that, as with other areas of research expertise, artists are funded by societies in order to find ways to improve quality of life.

4. I would here like to distinguish between Rancière's notion of the "politics of aesthetics" that understands all aesthetic experience as fundamentally political in the way it enacts or displaces normative modes of belonging and equality, and a "politics of the aesthetic" that traces relations held within the structures of a musical work. While the former is concerned with the felt aesthetic impact upon the listener, the latter is concerned more with the homological relations between structures of a work and structures of politics and societies. These two understandings of music's aesthetic politics can be further differentiated from the political discourse surrounding music (i.e., the Soundstreams campaign, and Barenboim and Said's expressions of intent for the West-Eastern Divan), and political references within musical works (i.e., the musical quotation of national anthems, and the use of political texts).

5. It is noteworthy that the repertoire of the Divan has not represented the musically diverse voices of those musicians who perform within it; the orchestra neither performs art music by Israeli or Palestinian composers, nor includes intercultural work featuring the integration of Israeli and Palestinian traditions. There is a significant disjunction between the visibility of interculturalism represented by the musicians and the sounds of interculturalism. Furthermore, given that the Divan's performances have taken place primarily in Europe rather than in Israel or Middle Eastern countries, Beckles Willson contends that the orchestra "projects a utopia in Europe for European audiences, [that] is not necessarily one that people in the Middle East seek" (2009b).

6. For further reading in this area see Jocelyn Guilbault (1997); and Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (2000).

7. My use of musical subjugation is offered not in the spirit of hyperbole, but is in fact supported by the ways in which the musicians are prevented by the organization from expressing certain views. Riiser has written about the response from an Israeli musician during a public discussion:

After the discussion, many other musicians told me that the newcomer's [an Israeli musician] outpouring would not have been possible had Barenboim been present at the workshop. In different ways, the musicians told me how they thought Barenboim controlled the narratives expressed by the musicians, and the fact that the newcomer was rebuked suggests

the efficiency of Barenboim's control. The Israelis especially emphasized this aspect; Barenboim being 'left-wing' with regards to Israeli politics did not, according to several informants, leave much room for a nuanced Israeli narrative to be presented in the Divan. Obviously, this creates an obstacle with regards to hearing the 'other's' narrative; and for the Israeli musicians this means that the narrative they get to present is not always the narrative they themselves want to present or truly believe (Rüser 2010:30).

8. This understanding of affect is drawn from the work of theorists including Gilles Deleuze and Brian Massumi. For a further overview of affect theory see Labanyi (2010:223-33).

9. Such performances have included the Victoria Symphony's concert, *Legends of the First Nations*, featuring Barbara Croall's *Stories from Coyote* and *Midawewe'igan (Sound of the Drum)* as well as Colin Doroschuk's *Heaven* featuring Esquimalt First Nations Master Singer August Thomas and the South Island Dancers on February 13, 2009; Alexina Louie's *Take the Dog Sled* for Inuit throat singers and orchestra on November 15, 2009, in Koerner Hall, Toronto; Derek Charke's *Tundra Songs* for the Kronos Quartet and Tanya Tagaq on January 30, 2010 at the Chan Centre in Vancouver; *Thunderbird*, a collaboration between Kwagiulth mezzo-soprano Marion Newman and the Aradia Baroque Ensemble on May 15, 2010, at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto; the opera *Giwedin* written by Anishinabe composer Spy Dénommé-Welch and Catherine Magowan and produced by Native Earth Performing Arts on April 8, 2010, at Theatre Passe Muraille; the *Oscana Symphony* by Cree composer Andrew Balfour, September 3, 2010, at the Conexus Arts Centre, Regina; *Tree People* and *Seven* by Barbara Croall presented by the Victoria Symphony Orchestra on October 15, 2011; Bruce Ruddell's musical *Beyond Eden* presented at the Vancouver Playhouse on February 2, 2010; and a DVD recording of Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico* featuring Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and throat singers, in which the original spontaneous ovation is scripted into the conclusion of the performance (Analekta 2007).

10. At the final performance of the Dakota Music Tour in Unity Park in Winona, Minnesota, only one audience member took up the offer to dance, at which point Davids himself also briefly joined in.

11. In our interview Davids noted that it is not his intention to have the entire audience dancing, although this is certainly an option audience members can choose.

12. As Pauline Wakeham notes, the rhetorical gestures of apology can "short-circuit sustained investigation of grievances with statements of contrition that invest the state with the power to portray injustices on its own terms. . . . such gestures perform the semblance of rapprochement without *unsettling* settler privilege, thereby bypassing more radical forms of structural transformation that would destabilize the power asymmetries underpinning white authority" (2012:3).

13. My thanks to Beverley Diamond for her observation that the impacts of artistic initiatives of reconciliation are more clearly able to be perceived over time,



and best understood through discussion with a wide cross-section of participants (including both musicians and audience members).

14. Like Davids' aims for the Dakota Music Tour, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has repeatedly emphasized that the process they are engaged in constitutes only the beginnings of a dialogue, and that the process of redress and reconciliation will take several generations to work through.

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