Popular music in music education in Germany - historical, current and cross-cultural perspectives

MÚSICA POPULAR NA EDUCAÇÃO MUSICAL ALEMÃ – PERSPECTIVAS HISTÓRICAS, ATUAIS E TRANSCULTURAIS

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abstract

This article presents reflections on the presence of popular music in German schools. Firstly, different terms are defined; then, the historical situation is outlined. From the 1950s to the 1970s, popular music was ignored by music educators who considered it to be a type of music of inferior quality in comparison to Western classical music. Currently, however, it has become an integral part of music education in school settings in Germany and is considered to be on equal footing with Western classical music. The discourse surrounding the teaching of popular music revolves around two diametrically opposed positions: the idea of "Ästhetische Bildung" (literally aesthetic education) through the use of popular music, and the view that students' music does not harmonize with educational goals because students perceive popular music in a physically dominated way, and not in a reflective one as required in music classes. Although this problem has already been solved by scholars, another tendency is evident in the teaching material when it comes to dealing with popular music. In those materials, music making is favored as well as categorizing different styles. According to some pieces of research, it is recommended to students not to perform in their leisure time. This article ends with a discussion about how both the cross-cultural discourse and that of popular music can nurture each other. By focusing on popular music from other countries and cultures in classrooms, students are likely to be more open to both music and people from other countries because they tend to consider this kind of music similar to those that they prefer.

KEYWORDS: popular music; Germany; music education; cross-cultural.

resumo

Este artigo apresenta reflexões em torno da presença da música popular nas escolas da Alemanha. Após a definição dos diferentes conceitos envolvidos, a situação histórica é delineada. Enquanto nos anos 1950 a 1970 a música popular foi ignorada pelos educadores musicais por ser considerada uma música de qualidade inferior,

em comparação à música erudita ocidental, atualmente tornou-se parte integrante da educação musical no contexto escolar alemão e é considerada em pé de igualdade à música erudita ocidental. O discurso sobre como ensinar música popular gira em torno de duas posições diametralmente opostas: a ideia de "Ästhetische Bildung" (educação estética), através do uso da música popular, e a visão de que a música dos estudantes não harmoniza com os objetivos educacionais, considerando que os alunos percebem a música popular de maneira predominantemente física, emocional e corporalmente, e não reflexivamente, como é requerido em aulas de música. Embora este problema já tenha sido academicamente resolvido, outra tendência é evidenciada quando se observa como a música popular é tratada nos materiais didáticos. Nesses, é favorecido o fazer musical, bem como a categorização dos diferentes estilos. Segundo as pesquisas, não é recomendado que os alunos executem música nos seus tempos de lazer. O artigo finaliza com uma discussão sobre como os discursos transculturais e os da música popular podem fertilizar-se mutuamente. Ao focalizar a música popular de outros países e culturas em classe, os alunos tendem a ficar mais abertos tanto para a música como para as pessoas destes contextos, porque tendem a considerar esse tipo de música semelhante àquelas que eles preferem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: música popular; Alemanha; educação musical; transcultural.

introduction

Popular music has become an integral part of music education in school settings in Germany. It is considered to be on equal footing with Western classical music in music classes today. This article outlines the definitions of various terms that are used in this context in Germany. After the description of the three phases of the historical development in this field, one of the main goals of today's discussion is demonstrated: "Ästhetische Bildung" (literally aesthetic education) with popular music. This article continues with a description of various concepts about how popular music can be taught in class against the backdrop of "Ästhetische Bildung". It ends by discussing how this topic which is adored by students can fertalize cross-cultural education.

definition

In Germany numerous attemps have been made to define the subject matter "Populäre Musik" ("popular music"). In the following a brief list of the most widely used terms is provided as well as a short definition (see also Schütz 1995, p. 263f.):

• "U-Musik" is the abbreviation for "Unterhaltungsmusik" (literally "entertainment music"; in English one normally uses the term "popular music") and is the opposite of "E-Musik" which is "Ernste Musik" (literally "serious music"; in English one normally uses the term "Western classical music"). This distinction has been established by the German copyright collective for the music industry, called GEMA, in order to distribute royalties.

• "Populäre Musik" is a sociological term and focuses on the popularity of a piece of music. Although it can be employed with reference to Mozart, it is generally used in the context of popular music.

- "Popularmusik" is a term which is based on the translation of the English term "popular music" and is sometimes used in educational contexts.

- "Pop- und Rockmusik" or "Pop-Rockmusik" subsumes not only pop music or rock 'n' roll music but also all the other styles of popular music like funk, soul, hip hop, punk, heavy metal, blues, jazz, house, techno, electro and others.

In today's context of music education in Germany the term "Populäre Musik" has been widely accepted and is now used in most publications in this field. One can say that this term now embraces at least all the above-mentioned criteria. Against this backdrop, I will use the term "Populäre Musik" in this article.

historical perspective

How to teach "Populäre Musik" is an issue that has been discussed for decades in Germany. Music educators have debated the answer to this question in particular with regard to the goals of music classes in schools. Christian Rolle (2005, p. 210-213) demonstrates the following three historical phases. In doing so, he refers to the two existing detailed overviews of Knolle (1979) and Terhag (1998):

From the 1950s to the 1970s music educators in Germany did not want to have "Populäre Musik" in music classes in schools. The basis for this adamant view was that they wanted to protect the youth of the day from the technically dominated music of the masses. "Populäre Musik" was seen as an enemy of educational goals, especially with regard to the transmission of values in education in school settings. Seen in this light, Western classical music or folk music was dealt with in order to reach and maintain this goal. However, this concept failed for three reasons: First, the judgements of "Populäre Musik" as music of inferior quality could not be upheld within the framework of aesthetic debates. Second, this concept was incompatible with enlightened thoughts on education. And third, the concept enjoyed very little success.

For these reasons, in the 1960s and 1970s, music educators in Germany arrived at the conclusion that students should be exposed to this kind of music in school and be taught to view it critically. Therefore music educators did not ignore this subject anymore; instead they wanted students to deal with this music in a cognitive, reflective and analytical way (e.g. Rauhe, 1969 and Wiechell, 1975) in order to enable them to arrive at a conscious and differentiated understanding of the music they listened to. This intention does not seem inappropriate. However, some of the music educators used the students' musical preferences only to raise the motivation for music classes. They wanted to lead their students from popular music to the Western classical repertoire. Others intended to analyze popular songs but with criteria from the Western classical repertoire in order to show their students how simple the songs really were. In doing so they wanted their students to realize that the classical repertoire is more complex and therefore more worthy. But it did not work: The students did not care about the fact that the popular songs were less complex and the method the songs were analyzed with was insufficient und inadequate. Meanwhile music educators have realized that you cannot assess pieces of music that were made in different contexts and for different audiences with the same criteria.

Since the 1980s music educators have changed their attitude towards the topic of "Populäre Musik" in music classes. A reason for this is based on the fact that the teachers themselves were gradually socialized with "Populäre Musik". Against this backdrop, they have begun to

deem "Populäre Musik" as equal to the classical repertoire and its goals for music education as generally similar. Since youths receive "Populäre Musik" in a physical way, music educators see special possibilities in terms of music making. Especially task-based exercises with regard to rhythm, phrasing and sound enable students to have differentiated experiences.

current perspectives

"Ästhetische Bildung" with popular music?

In Germany's educational system students should be imparted with "Bildung" in school settings. "Bildung" comprises both general education which consists of contents and actions that can be useful in one's later professional life, as well as an aesthetic dimension (Rolle, 2005, p. 214). In particular in the 1999s a controversial discussion erupted in which the difficult relationship between art and education was discussed (Rolle; Vogt, 1995). Mollenhauer (1990), for instance, deems aesthetic experience as a subjective and finally irrational issue that is not compatible with educational goals. According to Mollenhauer students can get information and knowledge about works of art in music lessons but they cannot have proper aesthetic perception in school contexts.

The most well-known view about the relationship between educational goals and popular music is the "Un-Unterrichtbarkeitsthese" (literally "the unteachable theses") by Jürgen Terhag (1984). He sees a critical approach to any kind of music in music classes as one of the main goals in music education. However, the function of "Populäre Musik" and its reception in its original context are opposed to this. "Populäre Musik" is not perceived critically when its function is to protest or when it is a means to relieve the burden of existence, a means to get away from it all or even an outlet for aggressions, frustrations, physical and psychological needs (Terhag, 1984, p. 347). Moreover, Terhag sees a further problem in the fact that students do not want their music to be judged even if the arguments are reasonable.

Rolle (1999, 2005, p. 214) attempts to solve the aesthetic debate in terms of "Bildung". He argues that the aesthetic approach is not as unreasonable as demonstrated and that it cannot be played off against educational practice. "Bildung" has to be more than teaching natural scientific and historical facts and contexts. It has to be a process of experience in order to open up possibilities for describing one's self and the world. This applies to music in general as well as to "Populäre Musik". As a teacher you have to stage an aesthetic space where students can experience something. Rolle prefers in this context productive approaches to music, such as composing, playing, singing, dancing, listening and in particular writing and discussing (Rolle, 1999, p. 163) In project-based lessons students can learn actively and based on experience. Rolle wants them to plan their learning steps on their own and to realize that the process of learning is the mail goal and not acquiring knowledge of music as well as musicianship (Rolle, 1999, p. 159).

In quoting Lugert (1984, p. 342) Rolle highlights that the intention is neither to give "Populäre Musik" an aesthetic label to improve its worth nor to assess "Populäre Musik" against wrong standards as was the case in the 1960s and 1970s. Rolle, as well as Seel (1996), Wallbaum (2002) and Hügel (2003) sees the use of the adjective "aesthetic" not only in contexts with works of art:

One cannot decide on the basis of objective or genre-immanent standards if a piece of music has been made aesthetically well. It only proves its worth in the act of aesthetic perception when, for instance, the utterance 'Listen - that sounds great' can convince another listener. (Rolle, 2005, p. 215, translation: EVS)

Class Contents and Activities

Against this backdrop of aesthetic experience in contexts of "Populäre Musik" in school, Rolle (2005, p. 215) suggests giving students the possibility to say what exactly "Populäre Musik" means to them. He considers the moment when students move from a physically dominated perception of their music to a reflective one as an important experience for them. Physically dominated means in this case that students perceive "their" music not rationally but predominantly emotionally and with their body. While listening, for instance at home or in a club, they do not think about the structure of the music, or about how they perceive music, or even about the process of perception, as is required by the aesthetic perception. In articulating this, Rolle resolves the above-mentioned problem outlined by Terhag in his "Un-Unterrichtbarkeitsthese" (see 4.1.). A best-practice example has been developed by Wallbaum (1998).

Wallbaum's Project Idea (1998)

The precondition of Wallbaum's project idea is the scientifically proven fact that one's judgement about a piece of music correlates with one's being part of a specific culture. That means that the perception of music influences a person's action (Wallbaum, 1998, p. 12). His project is therefore based on the hypothesis that if you imitate typical attitudes and comportments of a youth culture your perception of this type of culture and this style of music changes. The students' utterances before and after the project have confirmed this hypothesis and have shown the enormous impact of the project on their lives and their judgements of other styles of music. In the following, the steps of the projects are briefly outlined.

First, students decide which of the musical styles they want to deal with, for instance, techno, hip-hop, punk, etc. Then they have to split up into different groups and choose as a group one representative song from the musical genre. They carry on with writing instructions about how a person who is acquainted with this type of culture behaves, dresses, lives, works, etc., and what attitude (e.g. political, oppositional, assimilated) this person has (Wallbaum, 1998, p. 12). In each group at least one student should know this type of culture very well and the group should also consult at least one publication.

Second, each group chooses a style of culture which they are not acquainted with. At the beginning, they listen to the piece of music and write down their experience with the music, for instance verbal notes, a graphical score, good parts of the song and corresponding feelings, pictures, and attitudes. Then they dress and behave for a day or a week, a weekend or even several weeks in the manner described in the instructions. At the end, they listen to the piece of music a second time and write down their experience once more so that they can compare both times.

Third, they have to share their experience within the group and have to agree upon one experience and description which they have to refer to in the piece of music and have to present in class. Every detail should be linked with the music. Further, they should evaluate

the instructions. The presentation in class should also contain information about the aesthetic experience with the piece of music before and after the experiment.

further content and activities in class

Wallbaum's project idea (1998) gives students the possibility to discuss their taste in music, in this case in a receptive context. Rolle (2005, p. 215) sees a so-called "aesthetic debate" also in productive contexts such as composing a class-song. In this case students have to come to an agreement with their classmates in a type of "aesthetic debate" on the lyrics and about the arrangement. This kind of exposure is also possible when students design a choreography to a given or self-composed song or when they produce a cover version of a song or a video clip. In the latter case, they have to reach an agreement about what kind of attitude to life the music in the video clip should express (Imort, 2002).

Meanwhile software programs have been developed, especially for school settings. One of them is called *MAGIX Music Maker*[1] with which you can arrange more than 3000 sounds and loops by dragging and dropping. Schools can buy a school version which consists of the software and the licence.

The contents and activities outlined above are especially important when students have a physically dominated perception of the music in question. These are approaches which the students generally do not take in their leisure time and hence they can adopt a more reflective attitude to the music in class. In doing so, the educators can dispense with Terhag's concerns about teaching "Populäre Musik" in school (Terhag 1984). However, if you want to include "traditional" kinds of exposure like analyzing and listening to "Populäre Musik", you should choose songs which the students are not so familiar with, e.g. songs from the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or Elvis Presley.

teaching materials

Although the demonstrated argumentation about musical aesthetic experience in terms of "Populäre Musik" has been widely accepted, the teaching materials show another tendency. Practice-oriented journals like "Musik und Bildung", "Praxis des Musikunterrichts" or "Musik Impulse Journal" focus on publishing lead sheets and arrangements of number one hits from the current hit list. Music making takes centre stage in these articles which normally also include information about the band, a short analysis of the song and hints about how it can be taught. Other articles suggest discussing the advantages and disadvantages of copyright collectives as well as portraits of musicians and their presented image. However, Rolle (2005, p. 212) has already pointed out that teaching "Populäre Musik" in school is not equal to music-making. Given that "Populäre Musik" is also viewed as simple and primitive, the grooves and sounds of the songs are sometimes seen as easy to perform. However, Terhag already pointed out in 1987 the mistake in this thinking.

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1. http://www.magix.com/index.php?id=20772&L=25&AffiliateID=80&phash=1tfJcP0uekxzmk3q&gclid=CMqzsJbs7cM CFQTKtAod40cAfQ.

Unfortunately, the situation with schoolbooks is even worse. Even if every school textbook in Germany in the meantime contains one chapter about "Populäre Musik", the contents are already old-fashioned when the book is released, because the development from the first idea to the publication takes more or less 10 (!) years. In light of this situation, the authors of schoolbooks should only present the golden oldies in the books for students and merely provide methods and approaches in the teacher's handbook. By doing so, the teachers can combine both the material from the journals and the suggestions in terms of methods from the teacher's handbook. As a result, the textbook can keep up with the fast-moving music business as well as with the prevailing methods developed by music educators.

Excursus: Robert Giegling's concept of teaching jazz

Jazz is also subsumed under "Populäre Musik", but - like the golden oldies - it is not burdened with the issue of students' perceiving it the physically dominated way. Nevertheless, the context in which Jazz was born and is still performed as well as the performance and the music itself demand a different approach. In Germany, jazz is still a neglected topic in class either because in teacher-training it plays a secondary role and therefore teachers do not feel well-trained or research literature and teaching material are sparse. In my opinion, one of the most convincing concepts is Robert Giegling's approach (Giegling, 2009).

Giegling's main goal in terms of music education is to spark students' interest in jazz. Hence he wants students to gain insights into how jazz came about, how it is performed and what it comprises. Since Giegling considers students' first encounters with jazz as crucial to arousing their enthusiasm, he starts with listening to easily accessible songs such as Count-Basie-recordings or recordings of acid-jazz, funk- and soul-music (Giegling, 2009, p. 49f.) He also recommends bands like *Tower of Power* and musicians like George Benson, Herbie Hancock or Roy Hargrove because they are widely recognized as jazz musicians in the jazz scene, who once in a while, however, cross over to popular music. This first approach should not contain detailed analysis of the tone material or components of rhythm in order not to overwhelm the students. Instead, Giegling wants them to talk about tempo, character and tone color (Giegling, 2009, p. 50). As a next step, he suggests a comparison of two trumpet solos in order to ask students about

- the structure,
- the sound differences which can be described with adjectives like rough, aggressive, soft and introverted, etc.,
- the contrasts in terms of dynamic, note values and articulation,
- the kind of performance, such as playing with or without pauses
- the length of the solos,
- what happens beforehand and afterwards?
- what does the rest of the band do during the solo?
- and how do they feel and what pictures do they see while listening? (Giegling, 2009, p. 50f.)

The advantage of this kind of approach is that students do not have to know anything about jazz; they do not have to have prior knowledge of harmonics, knowledge of music theory

or jazz history or even to play an instrument in order to solve the given tasks. Nevertheless, this kind of exposure raises their understandings of jazz, in this case of improvisation and interaction (Giegling, 2009, p. 50).

According to Giegling the next step should be that students are able to follow the structure of a whole solo, including tone material, chord structure and form structure. As an appropriate task for this step he suggests the transcription of a clearly arranged solo (Giegling, 2009, p. 50f.). However, this challenging task can only be completed, if at all, in upper secondary schools.

Besides listening to jazz, Giegling also considers playing jazz as an integral part of the unit. Since jazz musicians are always aware of the harmonic structure in a song, he wants students to achieve this ability, too. It is important for Giegling to combine music theory with playing so that the students see immediately its relevance and importance in the realm of jazz. The music theory in mind while playing assumes also a particular role in terms of improvisation. In addition, for improvisations students need patterns typical of jazz as orientation. Giegling sees simple structured phrases as a starting point which can lead to increased intrinsic motivation on the part of students so that they can attain a higher level of performance.

Since jazz is an art which is generally not written down, Giegling recommends "Aebersold-Play-Alongs" and points out that the existing jazz-books should be handled with care. He suggests "Band-In-A-Box-programs" as well in order to get students to improve their playing skills. With these programs they can practice single passages for each tempo (Giegling, 2009, p. 49).

Students cannot grasp the nature of jazz until they have developed both a feeling for the tempo of the changing harmonies and an appreciation of how complex a piece is structured. However, if they have understood these aspects, they are able to appreciate what jazz musicians are able to achieve.

When he suggests playing jazz in class, Giegling also wants to create a more or less authentic situation. Therefore he lowers the light in the classroom and invites an audience in order to make the students feel that the interaction with the audience can influence a solo to a great extent (Giegling, 2009, p. 49)

As a third pillar of teaching jazz in class, Giegling considers two more aspects: the knowledge of a repertoire of jazz songs as well as the context and the history of jazz. In any case, he finds it important to discuss the situation and the oppression of the slaves, the problem with drugs and how jazz musicians practice (Giegling, 2998, p. 49). To provide an authentic impression of that time, he suggests reading statements from witnesses. Regarding the repertoire he does not want the jazz songs categorized, but rather the songs that have made the musicians famous should be dealt with.

Giegling presents a concept of teaching jazz in music classes that transmits an all-embracing knowledge and competence. I suppose, however, reaching these challenging goals takes a considerable amount of the school year and results in neglecting other important topics.

cross-cultural perspective

In this chapter, I will not compare how different countries deal with popular music in music education. My intention is rather to discuss how the scientific discourses about cross-cultural education and teaching popular music in Germany can cross-fertilize each other. Although both

discourses occurred more or less at the same time, scholars who have been working in one of the fields have only been widening their perspective a little (except for Kautny, 2010). That is surprising, but in my opinion, this fact derives from the view of the music in question. Whereas in the discourse of popular music scholars have focused on categorizing the music in terms of different styles, such as pop, funk, hiphop, etc., and not of origin, like the country or the continent the music is originally from, the discussion within the discourse of cross-cultural education has revolved only round the origin of the music; curiously only traditional classical music and folk music were considered to be an appropriate topic in this field and not popular music.

Against this backdrop, the following two questions remain to be answered:

1. Is it possible that cr oss-cultural education can lead to more tolerance of different styles of popular music?

2. Is it possible to achieve cross-cultural understanding with the help of popular music from different countries?

As mentioned above, some of the main problems with teaching popular music in school relate to the fact that students listen to their music in a physically dominated and not in a reflective way (e.g. Terhag, 1984; Rolle, 2005) as well as the fact that they have an emotional relationship to it. In light of this, teaching "Populäre Musik" in class might lead to students' adopting a dismissive position towards other styles of "Populäre Musik" and also to the classmates or teachers who favor it (see also Rolle, 2005, p. 214). Yet, within an "aesthetic debate" outlined by Rolle (see 4.2.) students should show openness and tolerance to music and suggestions form others. This problem can be solved by including aspects of cross-cultural education in the teaching methods of "Populäre Musik", because openness and tolerance to music and people from other countries are the main goals in the realm of cross-cultural education in Germany. In addition, people from other countries are emotionally engaged to a great extent in cultural goods like music and cultural standards (e.g. Wurm, 2006) in a similar way as has been already outlined for "Populäre Musik".

One of the solutions could be a small variation on Wallbaum's project idea (see 4.2.) with regard to goals. Wallbaum first wants students to recognize that the preference for a music style correlates with its specific culture. Therefore his hypothesis was that students should imitate typical attitudes and comportments of a youth culture they are not familiar with in order to recognize that their perception of the type of culture and the style of music changes. This hypothesis has a cross-cultural dimension which you can elucidate by going one step further, namely by having the students focus on their perception, if they understand the people and the music better after the experiment than beforehand.

A similar approach has been developed by Wolfgang Martin Stroh, but only with regard to cross-cultural education. Stroh refined Irmgard Merkt's "Schnittstellenansatz" (literally "interface approach", Merkt, 1983) which appeared as the first monograph in this field, by connecting it with his "Szenische Interpretation" (literally: "dramatic interpretation" (Brinkmann; Kosuch; Stroh, 2001; Stroh, 2007). As has been outlined by Giegling for teaching jazz, Stroh also focuses on creating a situation in which students can imagine and experience the context which the pieces of music come from. As opposed to Merkt (1983) Stroh suggests conducting the reflection process not only at the end of all activities in class but even in combination with, for example, singing, dancing, music making and talking. Within the "Szenische Interpretation" the students

play the role of a person in the situation in question, so that they are likely able to reflect on the present cross-cultural context.

Whereas Stroh provides numerous teaching materials for his approach[2], Thomas Ott (2012) has developed a framework for how students can approach people with a different taste in music and/or cultural background. According to this framework, the process of becoming acquainted with another person requires the following fundamental conditions (Ott, 2012, p. 135f.):

- **Openness:** People should not denigrate outright that which is foreign; instead they should always be open to beginning a dialogue.

- **Symmetry:** Although people know the hierarchical structure between teachers and students, students and students, musicians and non-musicians, scholars and non-scholars, etc. they should endeavor to talk to one another as equals.

- **Mutual assumption of self-bias:** It consists of the generally held assumption that you do not really know the other person and his/her experience with music.

- **Complementarity:** Each of the partner engaged in dialogue should disclose his/her bias, e.g. his/her preference and/or his/her experience with a certain kind of music and should try to recognize the bias of his/her partner.

- **Readiness to draw limits:** In this process it might happen that the partners in dialogue brush up against their limits, e.g. their willingness to accept and appreciate difference, their motivation or possibility to understand. They should ask themselves how far they are able to go. These kinds of limits are part of one's cultural or individual bias. Within this process the partners should come to a sensible acceptance of limits and should avoid blatant prejudices.

- **Liberty and Self-responsibility:** Ott sees this as the most important aspect: It consists of my being free to say what I would like to say and when I would like to stop the conversation. However, I am obliged to make sure that my partner in dialogue knows the reason why I am acting and behaving like this.

These aspects sound reasonable, but - in my opinion - the precondition for all of this is that those partners engaged in dialogue have to be open to the (musical) bias of their partners and have to really want to know something about each other. They should be inclined to take up another position without being judgmental. And if this is not possible, one cannot even enter into a cross-cultural discussion. The problem that still remains is how, for instance, a teacher can instill such an attitude into students, which brings me to the second question mentioned above and a possible answer. In order to imbue students with an appreciative attitude one can start with popular music from different countries. Studies (Knigge, 2012, p. 44,: e.g. Ott, 2006, Bailer *et al.*, 1992; Øia, 1996) have already shown that the preferences in music from students of different cultural backgrounds are not so different. This could be the starting point to connect gradually on a deeper level with the other person and to get to know slowly more about the cultural background from which he/she hails. To

2. http://www.interkulturelle-musikerziehung.de/multicultural_me/index.html.

conclude, in dealing with popular music from different countries in class, teachers have the opportunity to open open their students' minds to the music and people from other countries because they tend to deem this kind of music similar to what they prefer.

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